

DEVELOPING AN INTERCESSORY PRAYER MINISTRY
THAT FOCUSES ON PRAYING FOR THE COMMUNITY
AND COMMUNITY CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

**DEVELOPING AN INTERCESSORY PRAYER MINISTRY
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by

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The context of this project was the Columbus House of Hope Church in Columbus, Georgia. The objective of the project was to develop an intercessory prayer ministry that focused on praying for the community and for social, economic, and political changes. Quantitative and qualitative action research methods were used to gather data from the community through survey/questionnaires, observations, and final interviews. It was proven that increased knowledge and understanding of the Biblical mandate to pray for the community, enhanced enthusiasm and the level of commitment to engage in intercessory prayer for the community and for community change.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my family. My husband, the Reverend Doctor Brel Clark, is and has always been my number one supporter no matter what I was called or felt led to do. Our son, Brel II, and daughter, Roben Meylon have maintained their sense of humor throughout this journey and kept me laughing, even when I didn't think I had the time. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge our darling grandson, Jahmai Alexander "Goldfish," whose birth helped to make the journey even sweeter. Love and blessings to my mother, Rosie M. Tillman, who has kept the legacy of prayer alive by making prayer her daily occupation.

I would like to thank my professional consultants: Dr. Jeremiah Tillman, my brother and pastor of First Baptist Church, Petersburg, Virginia, who continues the legacy of prayer through his personal life and through his book entitled *Kingdom Keys: Mobilizing Your Church through Intercessory Prayer*; Dr. Raymond Cochran, pastor of Franchise Missionary Baptist Church, Phenix City, Alabama; and Dr. Brel Clark, pastor of Columbus House of Hope Church, Columbus, Georgia for their invaluable assistance, encouragement and prayers.

I would like to thank to my context associates JoeAnn Simmons, Cynthia Myricks, Johnnie R. Tillman, Rebecca Sanderlin, Plumber Sanderlin, Phyllis Bennett and Catrie Irby. You remained true to the covenant and saw me through from beginning to end. Words cannot express my deepest gratitude. It could not have happened without you.

Many thanks to my mentors, Dr. Robert Walker and Dr. Pauline Puckett, for giving so much to assure my success. Also, thanks to Dr. Dwight Hopkins, who served as our faculty advisor. To my peers, for their assistance, and being able to see how I could, “make it better,” blessings to you all.

I also want to express deep thanks to Jo Ann Simmons and Connie Williams who for four years remained faithful to the Thursday morning Bible study and witnessed God expand that study into what is now the Columbus House of Hope Church.

Thanks to the entire Columbus House of Hope Church family for your enthusiastic contribution in the success of this project. You can rest assured that this is just the beginning and I look forward to what God is going to do next.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the memory of my great-grandmother Rosie Yarbrough who was born in 1886 and died in 1969. This matriarch who we called “Big-mama,” spent countless hours on her knees before God interceding for others. Her memory lives on as my one-year-old grandson “Alex,” comes into the living room each morning to find me talking to God and interceding not only for family, but also for the community.

ABBREVIATIONS

CHHC	Columbus House of Hope Church
EE	Evangelism Explosion (Discipleship Training Ministry)
BTW	Booker T. Washington Apartments
HUD	(U.S. Department) of Housing and Urban Development
CBG	Community Block grant
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
OIC	Opportunities Industrialization Centers

INTRODUCTION

Columbus House of Hope Church began in the spring of 1993 with three women meeting for Bible study on Thursday mornings. The three women were Jo Ann Simmons, Connie Williams and the writer. Jo Ann and Connie lived in the Peabody public housing community where there was an infestation of drugs and alcohol abuse, physical and sexual abuse, child neglect and poverty. It soon became apparent that if we were going to see changes, we needed to pray for the people and for change.

When the church building was completed in spring of 2000 and regularly scheduled services began, the motto adopted by the church was, “A Place Where People Meet and Lives Are Changed.” The motto is based on II Corinthians 5:17, which states, “Therefore if any man [sic] be in Christ, he [sic] is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”¹ The new life of the person who is regenerated is the expression of the change that has taken place on the inside of that person.

The Church can no longer afford to ignore the call and challenge to be God’s change agent within our communities. The Bible is clear that if we desire change, then we must pray for change, remembering that God desires to use the people of God to be the instruments the Lord employs to create an environment where the kingdom of God is manifested.

¹ II Cor. 5:17, NAS. All scripture taken from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

Columbus, Georgia is not unlike most metropolitan communities across the nation with racism, sexism, and classism, in addition to the struggle for racial harmony, equality and liberation of the socially, economically, and politically oppressed. The writer contends that the people (public officials/leaders and lay citizens) desire to live in an environment of harmony, and of peace and quiet.

In I Timothy 2:1-2, Paul writes, “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayer, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men [sic], for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”² The Bible assures us of God’s power to change a community through the faithful prayers of God’s people. The Church has been given the responsibility to intercede on behalf of the entire community in order that we might live in peace and quiet.

The writer intends to show through ethnographic research that the general population of Columbus, Georgia desires social, political and economic change within their community. Ethnography, as defined by Michael H. Agar in his book *The Professional Stranger*, is the collaboration of one person (the researcher) with another person or group (the subject) to create a social relationship within which an exchange of information occurs.³ Agar adds that ethnography is not just about shared knowledge; rather it’s about the practice of everyday life, the way those practices are built out of shared knowledge, plus all the other things that are relevant to the moment.⁴ Thus, according to Agar, ethnography is both a process and a product. There is a process by

² I Tim. 2:1-2

³ Michael H. Agar, *The Professional Stranger* (San Diego, California: Academic Press, 1996), 53.

⁴ Ibid., 9.

which information is gathered as well as the final product, which in the writer's case is this dissertation, which consists of six chapters.

In chapter one, the author shares her spiritual journey, the context in which this ministry model was implemented, and the reason why intercession for the community was the area of ministry chosen. Chapter two draws on pertinent models and concepts related to the model of intercession for the community and the city. Chapter three centers on the biblical, historical, and theological basis for the ministry model. Chapter four discusses the research methodology employed during implementation of the model. Mixed (quantitative and qualitative) methods were used to test the effectiveness of the model. Chapter five explains what happened during the field experience. The use of a community survey/questionnaire, observations, and final interviews are explained in detail. Chapter six contains reflections on the field experience, insights learned from the project, suggestions and recommendations, and conclusion.

The writer believes this ministry project fulfills the purpose and objectives of the focus group, which was "Urban Development and Intercultural Communications." The group existed to educate church and community leaders on how to evaluate, design, and implement policies to solve pressing social, economic, cultural and political problems, and to teach leaders how to mediate and resolve conflicts within their communities. The group was also established to engage in gathering research on relevant policies and programs. This allowed each participant to actively seek opportunities to improve the social, economic and political conditions of their community.

The writer believes that through the implementation of this project, by meeting with various leaders of the community in order to better understand their concerns for the community, the door has been opened for her to become actively involved in seeking to

improve the malignant condition of her community. According to Jeremiah 29:7, God has called the Church to intercede on behalf of the community in which we live and to pray for change.⁵ However, that responsibility will not be fully realized until God's people are willing to become the instruments God needs to help bring about change.

⁵ Jer. 29:7

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The area of ministry that is being addressed in this document is intercessory prayer that focuses on praying for the community and for community change. The context of the ministry model is the Columbus House of Hope Church in Columbus, Georgia. The contention of this writer is that the local church not only has an obligation to be concerned for the welfare of and to pray for its members, but also to seek the welfare of the community and to pray on its behalf.

The project statement was: “how can help be given to raise the level of knowledge and understanding of God’s mandate to the church to intercede on behalf of the community through the development of a ministry model that focuses on praying for the community and for community change; thereby improving the level of commitment on the part of the believer to pray privately as well as engage in corporate intercessory prayer for the community?” This chapter seeks to explain why this area of **ministry** was chosen, the context of the model, and what particular insights the researcher brings to bear on this **ministry**.

Spiritual Autobiography

A Legacy for All Times

In thinking back to the old two-bedroom shack on “the hill,” in Jackson Mississippi, vivid memories still exist of Big Mama kneeling beside her bed in the living room and praying. Big Mama, my mother’s grandmother, had to have cataract surgery at age 74 or 75. She left the “country” (a rural area of Mississippi) and came to live with the family in Jackson. Every day for almost two years, like clockwork, Big Mama got on her knees before sunset and prayed for what seemed an eternity. On knees that were weak, unsteady, often pained and swollen from rheumatoid arthritis, Big Mama persevered in prayer. The writer always wondered about the things for which Big Mama prayed. She not only wondered as a child, but up to the present there have been vivid pictures in her mind of Big Mama on her knees praying. According to Mama, Big Mama had always been a prayer warrior. Mama shared stories with us about her childhood and Big Mama’s prayer life and the legacy she left for her, and now for her great-grandchildren and surely, even her great-great-grandchildren, as well as generations to come.

Since the writer has been an adult, Mama has taken many opportunities to recount specific details of Big Mama’s prayer life. When Mama was a little girl, she rose early in the morning to find Big Mama already awake and in the front room. Before Mama was old enough to understand, she would get out of bed and rush into the front room, calling for Big Mama. Many times Big Mama was standing at the window or in the doorway looking out, but would not respond. When she finished praying, she turned to Mama and said, “Baby, when you call Mama and I don’t turn no answer and you see my mouth

working, it's not cause I don't hear you. Mama hear you. But you just wait cause Mama is praying. I'm praying for you and all my children. I'm praying for all my grandchildren, their children and their children's children. I'm praying for those that pray and for those that don't pray. I'm praying for those that don't know how to pray and for those that don't have sense enough to pray. Baby, Mama is praying."

At an early age, all eleven children in the writer's family learned to say a blessing not only before the main meals, but also before eating anything, even a cookie. The children were taught the Lord's Prayer before we could barely speak and were mandated to pray every night before going to bed. Mama would literally have roll call at night. Calling each child's name, Mama would start from the oldest child to the youngest to ascertain who had prayed and who had not before the lights were out. Whether the children understood what we prayed or why we prayed was not the point of our praying. The point of our praying, as far as Mama was concerned, was that it was important to pray. That was the legacy that Big Mama left.

The Turning Point

As a young married adult at the age of 21, the writer was still praying only the Lord's Prayer, or she should say, "repeating" the Lord's Prayer, and from time to time she would think, "there has to be more to praying than this." She would repeat the Lord's Prayer within a few seconds and would experience absolutely nothing. Something was obviously missing from those moments of prayer because she felt empty inside, but did not understand why.

It was not until eleven years later at age 32 that one day because of the pressure and stress of trying to complete a college degree, mothering a one-year old and a two-year

old, and withstanding an unhappy married life, out of desperation (not having anywhere else to turn) the writer fell on her knees, as Big Mama often did, and cried out to the Lord to help. In that moment, she experienced the presence of the living God and felt God's Holy Spirit awaken inside her. That day the writer could not explain what happened, but she continued to mature spiritually and to develop her relationship with the Lord. She became clearly aware that it was that October morning of 1986 that she was converted. The writer no longer had to wonder what was missing during her prayer time. It was the presence of the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit taught her how to pray beyond repetition of the Lord's Prayer. God's Holy Spirit taught her how to pray the Word of God and the promises of God. It was and still is God's Holy Spirit teaching her to pray from the heart; a heart burdened for people. And now when she prays the Lord's Prayer, it is no longer prayed as a ritual of vain repetition, but in faith.

Stepping Forward In Faith

During those early months of being a Christian, the writer received a tremendous hunger and thirst for the Word of God while at the same time experiencing an overwhelming burden for people who did not have a personal relationship with Jesus. She wanted desperately to tell the world about Jesus and how their lives could be changed; however, Friendship Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia where the writer's family attended did not have an evangelism or discipleship ministry. So she looked in the Yellow Pages to find a church that could provide what she yearned for—teaching and training. She was determined to be the best witness for Christ that she could possibly be. The day after searching the Yellow Pages, she was invited to participate in a 16-week study entitled, "Evangelism Explosion" (EE) at Fairview Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia.

The Holy Spirit used the study, class time, and on-the-job training to transform her life. That same year she received additional training and was certified to implement EE as the new evangelism ministry in her church.

Of the many places the writer shared Jesus (never being timid about sharing Jesus anywhere), she constantly found herself knocking on doors at the Booker T. Washington (BTW) public housing community which was located approximately three blocks south of the church. The desire to go to the housing community was strong and overpowering. She wanted the people in public housing to know that they were just as important to God as anyone else and that Jesus could change their lives from the inside out. As a routine, the writer sent the children to school, met with Jesus for a personal quiet time, then went to BTW and witnessed to the residents until about noon. She never left home without first praying that God would direct her to those who needed to hear the message of Jesus Christ and how their lives could be changed. She prayed that, if nothing else happened, the seed of God's word would be planted in every heart that heard the gospel.

The first person to receive Jesus was a single twenty-one-year-old mother of two young children. Her name was Penny Brim. Penny was baptized after a few weeks and became a faithful member of the church until she and her children moved to Augusta, Georgia to live with relatives. Although the writer was happy for Penny, she was disappointed and saddened that she was leaving so soon after getting to know her and her sons. Only God knows of the changes that have taken place in her life and the life of her family because of Jesus. The writer found herself thinking and praying often for her and her family.

In the fall of 1991, toward the end of the second semester of teaching and training other church members in EE, the writer and her husband began to sense God's call to

complete what they were doing at Friendship Church and move on to the next stage of ministry. Her husband Brel taught the adult men's Bible class and she was a teacher and trainer for EE. After praying and fasting, the will of God was clear. However, God required them to take the next six months to complete the work in which they were currently involved and to talk with the pastor of the church before leaving.

Hearing but Not Understanding

God continued to reveal things that had once been hidden. As the writer stood gazing out of the kitchen window one spring morning in 1992 while washing the dishes and talking to the Lord, she heard a voice say, "You're going to preach my Word." And at that moment in a vision, she saw herself sitting in a seminary classroom surrounded by men. She instantly knew it was God and became as weak and limp as the dishtowel she was using to wash the dishes. It was an overwhelming moment since she did not know what to do with what God had spoken. She just cried profusely. Because the writer did not know how she was to respond to what had happened, it was years later before she told anyone, including her husband, what happened that morning.

The first Sunday in June of 1992, after completing the second semester of EE at Friendship, the writer's family united with Fairview Baptist Church. Her family at that time was warmly received and soon began serving in the church. Approximately eight months later following a mid-week service, as the writer exited the back door of the sanctuary she stopped to read the printed materials that had been carefully arranged on a small corner table. There she found a written request for individuals and groups desiring to minister to the people of Peabody. Peabody multi-housing community was the second largest of its kind in the city of Columbus. The decision to be used by God to minister in

the Peabody community was not one that she felt needed to be bathed in prayer, though she had no idea at that time as to how she would minister. But what she did know was that she was beginning to understand the deep personal call to ministry as she never had before. For the first time it was clear where her heart and passion were. The pieces were coming together. The writer wanted to minister to the needs of those who were helpless and hopeless without Jesus and who, for the most part, had been abandoned and forgotten by society and in many instances by the church of God.

Upon reading the request for different churches to partner in ministering to those in public housing, the writer telephoned the director of the requesting organization's mission ministries and scheduled an appointment to discuss the matter. During the discussion, she was told that numerous churches had attempted in various ways to minister to the people in the Peabody community, but had been unsuccessful. It was also stated that only the social ministries had survived over the years and that no one had been able to develop and maintain a long-term Bible class for women. The writer knew immediately that God had reserved that ministry for her.

Three months later, the writer began teaching a Thursday morning Bible class for the women of Peabody. For two years, no matter what she did or how she did it, the class never grew consistently beyond three in attendance. From time-to-time there was a visitor during those years, but the writer could always count on the same two women with whom the class started. We once had a "get acquainted" luncheon and invited women from the community. There were about 45 women present that day.

However, the slow growth did nothing to discourage her. Although she did not know exactly what God was up to, she knew it was something good, something beyond her capacity to comprehend at that time. She resolved to continue and not quit, no matter

what. Every Thursday morning before the other two women arrived, she stood in the doorway of the Beacon house (where we had Bible class), looked toward Peabody and prayed for the people of that community that God would save every person and change the community.

After two years of teaching the Thursday morning Bible class and experiencing numerical and spiritual growth, the pastor of Fairview encouraged the writer and her husband to start a Sunday morning Bible hour at the Beacon house. There were classes from pre-school to adult and volunteers from the church eagerly assisted. They began to see incredible changes in the lives of those who attended the Bible hour as well as those who taught the classes. A single mother of two young daughters shared with the Thursday morning Bible class that after learning what the Bible had to say about how she was living, she went to the man with whom she had been living for several years and told him to get out.

The writer continued to wrestle with God over the thought of becoming a preacher and a pastor. She woke up one night crying profusely and telling her husband, "Our people need a pastor." Soon, God called her husband to pastor. It was amazing to see how God expanded the Thursday morning Bible class for women to a Sunday morning ministry that once and for all had a pastor, so the writer thought.

God spoke to the writer one day about selling her family's house in the country where they lived and moving into the community where the people she loved lived. She shared this with her husband and his immediate reaction was, "Let's not do anything drastic." She knew it would take Almighty God to convince her husband to leave a two-story brick anti-bellum house, 4700 square feet, swimming pool, 16 acres, two ponds and over 100 pecan trees. That kind of change would not come easy for her husband, so she

trusted God. Almost two years later, the writer's husband said to her, "You were right, we should sell the house." Once the house was placed on the market, it sold in five weeks. There was no doubt that God did it.

During the two years as the writer waited for God to speak to her husband about selling the house in the country, the Columbus Baptist Association purchased property next door to the Beacon House where they taught Thursday and Sunday morning Bible classes, in order to build a sanctuary for the ministry, now that they had a pastor. That project did not continue without problems. During the building process, the ministry continued to grow. Bible classes were held from 8:30-9:30 a.m. on Sunday morning. The people who attended were transported from there to Fairview for worship at 10:00 a.m. Needless to say, some of the members of Fairview became agitated with the idea of having so many people from public housing attending their worship service. There was absolutely no question that it was time to leave Fairview. All work on the church building at that point ceased.

For two years God placed us at Cascade Hills Church under the leadership of Bill Purvis. It was during that time that the church building project resumed and was completed. The first worship service for the Columbus House of Hope Church began Easter Sunday, 2000. We soon adopted the motto that God had given us for the church, "A place where people meet and lives are changed."

No More Excuses

Although the writer was committed to reaching and teaching people for Christ, she continued to resist God concerning God's call to full-time ministry. After seven years of rejecting God's call, she finally acknowledged it, but only to a few people and never

publicly. It was another two years before she fully accepted and publicly acknowledged that she had been called to full-time ministry and was ordained. However, it was not until she came within what she considers an inch of losing her life.

It was early one spring morning. The children were at school and the writer's husband was at the office. The writer was alone with God. It was during her daily prayer time with the Lord when she began to question God as to why she had been experiencing what she considered spiritual depression. She was functioning, but not at the level of which she was capable. The writer insisted that the Lord tell her what was happening with her because she did not want to continue as she had. Within a few seconds of asking God to tell her what was going on with her, it felt as though someone had taken her heart into their hand and with their fingers wrapped tightly around it, began to gradually squeeze tighter and tighter. It wasn't until she began to say over and over again "I'll preach your Word," "I'll preach your Word," that the pressure around her heart began to subside. The writer knew without a doubt that she had once again encountered Almighty God and realized that the Lord was not going to allow her to continue running and rejecting his call to "preach the Word." In May 2001, she publicly acknowledged that God had called her to full-time ministry and was ordained in August 2001.

Accepting God's call to ministry has freed the Lord to work in and through the writer in ways God could not have worked without her total surrender. She now has a clearer vision for ministry and what she was called to do. That vision involves not only the people of the Columbus House of Hope Church, but the entire community. The vision not only involves being concerned about and praying for the church, but being concerned about and praying for the community.

Contextual Analysis

The Community

The Columbus House of Hope Church (CHHC) is located across from the second largest multi-housing community in the city of Columbus, Georgia. The Peabody Housing Community consists of 510 apartment units. According to the 2001 statistics, 85 percent of the heads of households are young single mothers; 2 percent single fathers; 2-3 percent are senior adults; 8 percent are single individuals; and 1 percent are mother and father (married) households.¹ Recent studies show that of all the families in Peabody, 523 members are Black, 42 are White and 5 are Asian. Those employed full-time are 26; while only 46 of the heads of the household are employed part-time.²

The community surrounding CHHC and Peabody has been defined as a “slum area.” Because of this, the Columbus Consolidated Government has developed what is called “The Medical Center Redevelopment Plan.” This plan emphasizes housing and economic development goals pursuant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Block Grant (CDBG) neighborhood revitalization strategies. The Inspections and Codes Enforcement Division, in a 2002 survey,³ identified 120 substandard residential units out of the total 306 existing residential structures. This translates to a 39.22 percent ratio of substandard residential units in the area. The survey also showed that out of the 416 total structures counted, 23 percent (97) were commercial

¹ Columbus Housing Authority, *Tenant Demographics* (Columbus, Georgia, 2001).

² Columbus Consolidated Government, *Medical Center Redevelopment Plan* (Columbus, Georgia, 2002).

³ Ibid.

and 74 percent (306) were residential. These numbers do not reflect the multi-housing complex (Peabody Apartment) that consists of 510 units. In addition, 1990 Census data⁴ shows that for the overall study area there is a 18.20 percent unemployment rate compared to 5.80 percent overall unemployment rate for Columbus as a whole.

The population of the study area is primarily comprised of two races: African-American and Caucasian. Only a small portion, approximately 2.61 percent, is made up of other ethnic groups. The major population is approximately 61.46 percent African-American and approximately 35.93 percent Caucasian. The majority of the people living in the study area are of working age. The 2000 Census data⁵ indicates approximately 53.92 percent of the study area's population is between the ages of 18 and 65. Approximately 14.47 percent of the population is age 65 or older with approximately 31.61 percent of the study area population below age 18. According to the 2000 data,⁶ there are more females living in the study area than males. The total male population is 1,418 or approximately 43.10 percent of the study area population, contrasted to the total female population being 1,872, or approximately 56.90 percent. The average age of the female population is seven years higher than the average age of the male population. The average age of the males in the study group is 28.7 years with the average age of females being 35.7 years. The average family size is 3.14 persons.

Low education levels are present in the study area. The majority of people ages 25 or older do not have a high school education. Of the high school graduates, only 5.91 percent have earned a four-year college degree or higher. The low level of education

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

contributes to many other negative economic factors, such as low income levels, unemployment, and poor housing conditions. According to the 1990 Census,⁷ the poverty rate of the study area is 50.69 percent. Of the Census 1990 population total of 3,610 people in the study area, 1,830 people were at the poverty level or below the poverty level. Approximately 86.6 percent of 3,125 persons in the study area were of low-to-moderate income.

Columbus House of Hope Church Membership

Although the House of Hope Church enjoys diversity, it is not a true reflection of the diverse community at large. The membership is predominately Black females, which comprise approximately 75 percent of the congregation. Of those females 75 percent are over the age of 18. The males make up approximately 25 percent of the church's membership with 45 percent being 18 and older. The economic composition of the church is diverse, with 80 percent at the poverty level, 10 percent considered low income, 8 percent are middle income and 2 percent are the upper income level. Although the House of Hope is predominately African American (99.25 percent), there is a hint of diversity with 0.5 percent Caucasian and 0.25 percent Hispanic. The early history of the church shows that the majority of members were from the public housing community (80 percent) and very few from outside. However, a remarkable reversal is being seen with approximately 60 percent now commuting from communities outside of the Peabody housing area.

⁷ Ibid.

The unemployment rate among the members has decreased tremendously within the last two years primarily because of the 1996 legislation to push people into work.⁸ The majority of adult members have at least a high school education with one person already having a doctoral degree and two pursuing doctoral degrees.

Columbus House of Hope Church Leadership

The two pastors and lay leaders of the House of Hope Church understand that their role as a local body of believers is to impact the community around them by being the witnesses for Christ that they have been called to be. This role is assumed wherever they are, which includes effectively ministering to the needs of those in the community. Because God has chosen to raise up a local body of believers in Columbus, Georgia called the Columbus House of Hope Church (CHHC), we do not view ourselves as being limited in our efforts to minister globally. Although the church has not advanced to the point of sending members to minister abroad, the church provides financial and prayer support to further the Gospel in New Guinea, West Africa. CHHC is making every effort to “get it right” locally, meaning that the CHHC is making strides in ministering to the needs of those in the community first.

The mission of the CHHC is to reach, equip, and send out committed members into the community to do the work of ministry. The pastors believe this mission is consistent with that of Jesus. In the fifth chapter of Luke, Jesus told James and John, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.”⁹ Those who accepted Jesus’ invitation

⁸ *The Washington Post*, quoted in “Welfare Enrollment Down, But Poverty Up,” *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, 27 September 2004, sec. A, p. 11.

⁹ Luke 5:10b

to follow Him were trained extensively to continue the work of making disciples upon His departure. The Apostle Paul cites the importance of believers being equipped for ministry in Ephesians 4:12, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service.”¹⁰ In Luke chapter 10, when Jesus was confident His disciples had been thoroughly equipped, He sent them two by two on mission.¹¹

Although the pastors and leaders understand the mission of the church, the congregation as a whole has not yet grasped the concept of who believers are in Christ and their call to fulfill the mission of the church. The current picture of the church is not consistent with its fundamental ideas and theology. Until what we do and say is effectual in the life of every member, we will only have a picture that remains in need of constant retouching, but not one that will be perfect.

The mission of our church to “make disciples” is communicated regularly during worship through the preaching, teaching, praying and during the invitation to discipleship on Sunday morning, Bible hour, new member’s class and Wednesday night service. Although the majority of members are new converts and are faithful in attending worship, the level of commitment for Bible study and Wednesday night praise and prayer hour can certainly be increased. There seems to be an absence of zeal and lack of enthusiasm on the part of some for the Word and a desire to grow and mature in the knowledge of the Word. While some are challenged by work schedules and participate in Sunday morning worship and Bible class and put forth great effort to be faithful, there is obviously a missing link somewhere with others.

¹⁰ Eph. 4:12

¹¹ Luke 10:1

The writer believes that, whatever ails the body, it is the responsibility of the leadership, particularly the pastor(s), through the wisdom of God to make the proper diagnosis and to begin to administer the most effective treatment. The writer is convinced that the whole process must begin and end in prayer. Along with the pastors, the CHHC is blessed to have godly ministry leaders and teachers who are committed to carrying out the mission of the church. It's the oneness of the pastors and leaders that help to promote the unity of the Spirit within the congregation. However, it is the apathy of some members that threatens the well being of the church and will no doubt hinder our efforts to accomplish the church's mission. The ministry of prayer is of vital importance in the local church.

Columbus House of Hope Church Organizational Structure

The CHHC organizational structure is as follows:

Pastors

Minister of Education

Educational Leaders/Teachers

The pastors as visionaries and goal setters have led the church in establishing a clear, biblical, focused mission statement from which the church's objectives and goals are derived. As preachers and teachers, the pastors of the CHHC are the primary educators because preaching is one of the single most effective educational opportunities; we regularly stress the importance of every member being committed to carrying out the

mission of the church. The pastors' goal is to train and develop those who are faithful so they in turn will be able to teach and train others (2 Timothy 2:2).¹²

The primary function of the minister of education is to equip and enable the members to do the work of ministry. It is the responsibility of the ME (Minister of Education) to discover, enlist and train potential workers and leaders. As a planner, the educational minister supports the educational organization in making and executing plans. She is responsible for knowing what needs to be accomplished and what actions achieve those ends. As communicator and promoter, the ME is to skillfully share her personal message of the Gospel and the church and to promote the church's educational ministries and activities. The ME is to also function as a motivator, inspiring others to act and to recognize their own spiritual needs, values, and objectives, and then to facilitate growth in these vital areas. Finally, the ME is responsible for evaluating the content of learning, process of learning, worker performance, facilities, curriculum, and organization and program to determine if what has been accomplished through the educational ministry of the church lines up with the overall mission of the church.

The educational leader/teacher is to enable change in the learners' lives. The teacher must continually engage learners in a quest for an ever-deeper understanding of the Word of God and their relationship with God. The teacher focus should be on the learner learning and not on self. There must be a commitment to seeing lives changed. To do this, teachers must always look for teachable moments that will facilitate change.

In the near future, the church will appoint deacons and deaconesses (male and female servants). As leaders of the church, we realize that even with the most proficient

¹² II Tim. 2:2

organizational structure with the clearest goals and objectives, our efforts are fruitless unless the Spirit of Truth is present in the process, moving in and through those involved. It is up to those involved to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. The Bible is clear that it is “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts.¹³

Attempts are made to diffuse congregational authority among those who are faithful and demonstrate leadership ability. From the interaction within the service, it is sometimes hard to tell who is in charge. It is not necessarily an effort to throw visitors off, but it is an effort to involve those who are faithful and committed. We are more concerned that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ develop their spiritual gifts and talents than about what others think concerning the delegation of power and authority at the CHHC. As pastors, we are concerned with placing novices in positions of leadership and authority. We realize that to do so is to set up the church for its own demise. A plan of action is being developed to assure that new converts and members are provided the proper care (spiritual, emotional, social, financial and otherwise), nurturing and guidance during the transition of moving from being a novice to taking on the responsibilities of a leader.

It is the responsibility of the pastors to communicate the mission of the church and its God-given vision. However, the leaders, in cooperation with the pastors, are also responsible for iterating what is being communicated from the pulpit.

The rule of thumb in dealing with issues of concern within the congregation is to always be open, sensitive and flexible. Whether addressed publicly or privately, the idea is to deal with concerns before they can cause division. There is clear communication from

¹³ Zech. 4:6

the leadership of the church that conflict and strife can destroy a body of believers and that the unity of the church must be protected at all costs. Our leaders are encouraged to keep their spiritual antennas up and eyes open to potential threats of any kind.

Pastors have the awesome responsibility to shepherd God's people. They have been given the task of making sure that the sheep are tended, protected, taught, led and, most of all, loved. If all the members were alike, the job would be easy. The challenge comes not only in understanding the diversity within the congregation, but also in helping each member to find his or her place of service within the body, based on the unique gifts and talents given to each one in order to carry out the mission of the church.

Synergy

During the summer of 2003, the Columbus House of Hope Church began its Wednesday night praise and prayer hour. The objective was to thank God for answered prayer and to petition the Lord on behalf of those members who were struggling in their faith walk, not faithful in attendance, the unsaved, and other specific needs of the church. It was a deep concern for new converts that sparked the writer's desire for the church leaders to come together and pray. They began to experience answered prayer and saw how God was working in the lives of many of the new converts. Many who had been absent without official leave were returning to the church and attending Wednesday night praise and prayer hour.

Understanding that the pastor's responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of service and that that service takes place within the community in which one lives, the writer began to wonder what might happen if the church began to pray not only for its members, but also for the community. As she began to ponder the idea, she realized that

God was up to something. She began encouraging those present on Wednesday night to pray for the community as well as the church.

The Columbus House of Hope Church is “A place where people meet and lives are changed.” This motto speaks to what the church is about. Members are conscious of the fact that only God has the power to change lives, but they are to be agents of change, instrumental in changing lives and circumstances not only in the church, but also throughout the community and the world.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART OF INTERCEDING FOR THE COMMUNITY

“Prayer is indeed ‘the Christian’s vital breath.’ It is also God’s gracious arrangement whereby God’s saints are privileged to work together with the Lord in furthering God’s sovereign purpose. In intercession God brings the saints into cooperation with God in accomplishing the Lord’s work in the world. It is the most noble and most essential ministry God gives to the church—but is the most neglected.”¹ In an attempt to refocus our attention on what is of vital importance in seeking not only the well being of the church, but also the welfare of the community, this chapter will affirm some current ministry models and concepts of intercessory prayer.

In his book, *Warfare Prayer*, C. Peter Wagner focuses primarily on intercessory prayer as a weapon for world evangelization. However, Wagner believes that prayer is not an end in itself, but a means of opening the way for the Kingdom of God to come, not only in evangelism, but also in material sufficiency and social justice within the community. Wagner suggested that the church take on “the giant of the impersonal, looming city” as a strategy for evangelism and, along with John Dawson, outlined six rules for taking a city.²

¹ P. J. Johnson, “Operation World: A Handbook for World Intercession,” (1978): 15, quoted in D. Edmond Hiebert, *Working With God Through Intercessory Prayer* (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1991), Preface.

² C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1992), 162.

The first rule concerns the area. A manageable geographical area with discernible spiritual boundaries should be selected. Wagner believes that beginners should be careful not to target an area too large for warfare prayer or they risk being ineffective. This does not mean that there won't be occasions when God will call some to pray for the large-scale things, especially when the prayers are focused on critical issues.³ Wagner attributes the level of effectiveness on the part of the prayers to their ability to understand the will of God and their obedience to pray according to God's appointed time. He also brings out an interesting point concerning the intercessors' attitude when realizing that change has come as a result of prayer. Wagner reminds his readers that his experience has been that intercessors knew that any number of other intercessors were also hearing from God and praying the same way concerning a matter and when they sensed they had the victory, it did not mean to any of them that they had single-handedly brought down the enemy forces, but they knew they had a part in the final outcome. This reminder encourages the writer who has often wondered if the Columbus House of Hope Church is the only church in the city attempting to take on the enormous task of interceding on behalf of the community.

Wagner's second rule concerns the unity of pastors. According to Wagner the unity of the pastors and other Christian leaders in the area should be secured and they must pray together on a regular basis. He points out that in a given city the highest spiritual authority has been delegated to pastors, therefore as the spiritual gatekeepers of the city, there is no

³ Ibid., 163.

substitute for the unity of the pastors of the city as a foundation for effective spiritual warfare.⁴ Wagner contends that it is important for pastors to understand that the unity required to take a city for Christ is not doctrinal unity, legal unity, political unity or philosophy of ministry unity, but spiritual unity.⁵ Wagner believes that it is unrealistic to think that there will be one hundred percent of the pastors of any area in spiritual agreement and praying together, and that those called to the task should not wait for one hundred percent, but rather expect a consensus of a considerable number of influential pastors who will agree to meet together at a scheduled time to pray.

The third rule concerns the body of Christ. Wagner asserts that there should not be the image that the effort is an activity of a particular denomination such as Pentecostals and Charismatics, but of the whole body of Christ.⁶ This writer believes that this is perhaps one of the most difficult rules to manage because Christians have traditionally feared crossing denominational lines because of doctrinal, political, philosophical and spiritual differences. However, Christians should be encouraged because it is evident that this is changing and the situation is getting better. The writer is able to see the change within her and her city as she, for the last seven months has been actively involved with the Muscogee County Clergy Association (MCCA) of Columbus, Georgia. This association crosses denominational, ethnic, and gender lines. Each member is encouraged to pray to God according to his or her faith tradition.

The fourth rule concerns the spiritual preparation. Spiritual preparation through repentance, humility and holiness must be of primary concern to the individuals who

⁴ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 167-68.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 169.

participate in praying for a city, according to Wagner. Wagner states that to violate this rule or to take it lightly is to end up with many wounded, discouraged and unhappy warriors. The writer agrees with Wagner on the seriousness of this issue, which often leaves many Christians to ask the question as it pertains to everyday life situations, “Why have my prayers gone unanswered?” Yes, believers must be clean vessels through which God’s divine power is to flow. In his book, *Kingdom Keys: Mobilizing Your Church Through Intercessory Prayer*, Dr. Jeremiah Tillman contends that, as priests, the believer’s walk before the Lord is to be in harmony with the work of the Lord and that Christians must prove that their desire to be holy is wholehearted and complete if we want God to hear and answer our prayers.⁷

The fifth rule has to do with the research. Wagner suggests that intercessors research the historical background of the city in order to reveal spiritual forces shaping the city. The sixth and final rule involves the intercessors. Wagner believes it is of utmost importance for intercessors to work with other gifted intercessors who are called to strategic-level warfare seeking God’s revelation of: (a) the redemptive gift or gifts of the city; (b) Satan’s strongholds in the city; (c) corporate sin past and present that needs to be dealt with; and (d) God’s plan of attack and timing.⁸ Wagner asserts that if the work is going to be done well, gifted intercessors need to be identified, encouraged and released to stand in the gap for the city.⁹ He describes the gift of intercession as “the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to pray for extended periods of

⁷ Jeremiah Tillman, *Kingdom Keys: Mobilizing Your Church Through Intercessory Prayer* (Lansing, Illinois: Cross Power Publications, 2003), 26.

⁸ Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, 173.

⁹ Ibid.

time on a regular basis and see frequent and specific answers to their prayers to a degree much greater than that which is expected of the average Christian.”¹⁰ The writer agrees with Wagner on the point that God calls specific individuals to commit to spending time interceding on behalf of others, however, the writer does not necessarily agree that it is a fair assertion to say there is a certain amount of time involved each day in prayer with the person who has the gift of intercession. Wagner also contends that very few pastors are also intercessors,¹¹ meaning that few are gifted for intercession. This writer does not necessarily agree with Wagner on this point. There may very well be more pastors gifted for intercession than are accounted for. As a pastor, there was a time when the writer did not believe she was gifted for intercessory prayer, however, as the years passed with spiritual growth and actual work in the ministry, the writer is clear that she has been gifted for intercessory prayer.

Wagner proposes that intercessory groups, pastors and other lay Christians seek God’s revelation in several things: (1) the redemptive gift or gifts of the city—John Dawson believes that each city is intended by God to be a place of personal liberation and that determining the redemptive gift of the city is more important than identifying the nature of evil principalities, although both are needed; (2) Satan’s strongholds in the city—exercising the gift of discernment (the ability to distinguish between an evil spirit and God’s Holy Spirit) is crucial in knowing whether or not the real battle is with demonic powers or just with sin and its consequences; (3) Territorial spirits assigned to the city—to the degree possible, the intercessors should seek to know the names, either

¹⁰ Ibid., 174.

¹¹ Ibid., 175.

functional or proper, of the principalities assigned to the city as a whole and to various geographical, social or cultural segments of the city; (4) corporate sin past and present that needs to be dealt with—Wagner believes that the sinful behavior of a nation as well as a city provides openings for what he calls high-ranking principalities and powers to establish spiritual strongholds that will not be loosened other than through corporate humility and repentance; (5) God's plan of attack and timing—Wagner gives warning to the danger of going into spiritual warfare in the flesh. It is crucial that intercessors hear from God what the Lord wants done, how it is to be done, and when it is to be done.

In his book, *Engaging the Powers*, Walter Wink provides an exceptional intellectual, historical, and scriptural basis for Christian intercession. Wink believes that history belongs to the intercessors, who believe the future into being, and that intercession is a means of focusing for action and of creating action,¹² however, one must pay careful attention to his or her role as intercessor. Wink contends that individuals must recognize that it is God rather than ourselves who initiates prayer and that it is God's power, not ours, that answers to the world's needs. We are always preceded in intercession. God is always praying within us. When we turn to pray, it is already the second step of prayer. We join with God in a prayer already going on in us and in the world.

Wink, in his use of scripture gives a different slant on the ministry of intercession from that of Wagner. Romans 8:26-27 says . . .

26 And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.¹³

¹² Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1992), 304.

¹³ Rom. 8:26-27

According to Wink, this groaning of the Holy Spirit within us echoes and gathers up two other groanings mentioned in the previous paragraph: the groaning of the whole creation in pains of childbirth (Romans 8:22); and we ourselves, who groan inwardly as we await the ultimate transformation—the redemption of our bodies (8:23). The Spirit gathers up all this pain and releases it through us with sighs too deep for words. These sighs are not our own sighs, given articulation by the Spirit. They are the actual groanings of the Spirit within us, and they must be given articulation by us.¹⁴

This groaning of the Spirit within us is related to the groaning of the created order, subjected as it is to futility (Romans 8:20). We are inundated by the cries of an entire creation: the millions now starving to death each year, the tortured, the victims of sexual abuse or battering, the ill, and the oppressed. Our task in praying is precisely that of giving speech to the Spirit's groanings within us. But we must not try to bear the sufferings of the creation ourselves. We are to articulate these agonizing longings and let them pass through us to God. Only the heart at the center of the universe can endure such a weight of suffering. So the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know how to pray as we ought: this does not mean, as it is most often taken, that we lack the proper techniques. Our ignorance is not that we do not know the right methods, but precisely that we think we know how to pray. We think it is something we do. Not so, if we do not even know how to pray as we ought.¹⁵

We learn to pray by stopping the attempts and simply listening to the prayer already being prayed in us. And what we hear is a strange kind of help. The Spirit groans

¹⁴ Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 304.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 304-05.

in us inarticulately, wordlessly, teaching us to pray by inducing us to give words to these groanings. Our task is simply to be the Spirit's utterances to language, to consciousness and to awareness. Wink calls it a wholly erroneous habit of Christian's prayer to call on the Holy Spirit to be present with us. It is we who need to be present to the always-present Holy Spirit. We do not turn to God and try to make contact through prayer. The Holy Spirit is already groaning in us. We would not even think of praying had not the Holy Spirit's groaning in us prompted us to do so. We are able to pray only because God is always, increasingly, praying in us.¹⁶

Wink describes the Holy Spirit as a "substrate of molten magma under the earth's crust," trying to erupt volcanically in each of us. It does not have to be invoked, but merely allowed; not called to be present, but acknowledged as present already. Our task then, is not to mobilize God, but rather to bring our consciousness and commitment to God, to give articulation to the inarticulate groanings within our souls, to bring God's longings to speech. Wink adds that it is not God's responsibility to do what God's groaning in us is seeking to impel us to do. In an effort to establish social justice, Wink believes social action without prayer is soulless, but prayer without action lacks integrity and we should not attempt to choose between the two when neither is valid without the other. Wink points out that Christians are not called to do everything, to heal everything, to change everything, but only to do what God asks of us concerning the well being of our communities. And in the asking, God supplies Christians with the power to perform their God-given tasks.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., 305-06.

¹⁷ Ibid., 306.

As with Wagner and others, Wink also considered the role of principalities and powers in praying for the community. However, Wink's perspective on principalities and powers clears up the notion by some that unanswered prayer is always a result of either our failure or God's refusal. He believes that prayer also involves the great socio-spiritual forces that preside over so much of reality—forces such as massive institutions, social structures and systems that dominate our world today.

Wink referenced the book of Daniel, which revealed to humanity the role of the powers in blocking answers to prayer. Daniel is depicted as a Jew who had risen to high position in the Persian bureaucracy in Babylon. Three years before, Cyrus had freed the Jews from captivity and offered to rebuild their temple at royal expense. Yet few Jews had responded by returning home. When the story opens in chapter ten, Daniel is in deep mourning and fasting for his people. After twenty-one days, an angel came and said, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words."¹⁸ Why then was the angel twenty-one days in arriving, if the prayer was heard on the very first day that Daniel prayed? Because the angel continues, "But the prince of the Kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia."¹⁹

Now, while Michael occupies the angel of Persia, the messenger-angel has slipped through and is able to deliver the vision of the future for Daniel's exile people. That

¹⁸ Dan. 10:12

¹⁹ Dan. 10:13

mission was complete. “But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.”²⁰

The angel of Persia is able to block God’s messenger from answering Daniel’s prayer. For twenty-one days, Daniel contends with unseen spiritual powers. Perhaps he also had to slough off internalized elements of Babylonian spirituality; he bore as his own a name compounded from the name of a Babylonian god (Belteshazzar, Dan. 4:8). But whatever changes in him may have been necessary, it is not after he has purified himself that the angel is dispatched. Daniel is heard on the very first day, as the words leave his lips. The real struggle is between the angels of two nations. The angel of Persia does not want the nation he guards to lose such a talented subject people. The angel of Persia actively attempts to frustrate God’s will, and for twenty-one days succeeds. The principalities and powers are able to hold Yahweh at bay!²¹

Daniel continues praying and fasting, God’s angel continues to wrestle to get past the angel of Persia, yet nothing is apparently happening. God seems to have answered the prayer. Despite this apparent indifference, however, there is a fierce war being waged in heaven between contending powers. Finally Michael, Israel’s own guardian angel, intervenes and the angel gets through.²²

Wink notes that the wonder, then, is not that our prayers are sometime unanswered, but that any are answered at all. The new insight in Daniel, according to Wink, is that God is limited not only by our freedom (free will), but also by the freedom of institutions and systems as well and that God’s ability to intervene, uninvited, is extremely circumscribed—as seen in the book of Daniel and in when we pray. Wink believes that what God is able to do in the world is hindered, to a considerable extent, by the

²⁰ Dan. 10:20, 21

²¹ Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 310.

²² Ibid.

rebelliousness, resistance, and self-interest of the powers exercising their freedom under God. In summary, prayer involves not just God and people, but God and people and the powers. The good news is that the powers capable of frustrating God's purposes and plans are no match for God's intercessors. Our prayers are heard the very first day even though they are seemingly unanswered. The church must pray for the community and for community change no matter what, for even one day without justice in our communities is one day too many.

At QuakerInfor.com, Stan Perisho wrote an article titled, "Kingdom Building Prayer: Tearing Down the Barriers in Your Community."²³ To challenge his readers to a new depth and experience of God that increases the church's effectiveness for the sake of the kingdom, Perisho attempted to give a clarifying definition of spiritual warfare prayer before engaging the effects of spiritual warfare prayer on the community in terms of evangelism. Perisho describes spiritual warfare as praying from such a depth of relationship to God that it directly confronts Satan and his kingdom. This kind of prayer effects salvation, physical healing, deliverance, and breaking of bondages binding the power of Satan, tearing down territorial strongholds and, in general, defeating Satan's work in our world. Perisho asserts that it is not just deliverance and praying to bind the power of Satan, but living in such a close personal relationship to God that we can sense God's heart and pray accordingly. "If one seeks to enter spiritual warfare without a close personal relationship with God they are in real danger from Satan's attack. This does not mean one must be perfect, but one must be sure there is no known sin in their life."

²³ Stan Perisho, *Kingdom Building Prayer: Tearing Down the Barriers in Your Community* Article 1 [database on-line] Available from <http://www.quakerinfo.com/pt.shtml>; Internet; accessed May 3, 2005,.

Perisho continues by stating that because Jesus has already given the church authority, there is no need for the church to ask Jesus to bind Satan. Instead God's people should pray, "Satan, in the name and by the authority of Jesus' death on the cross, I bind or we bind you and command you . . ." According to Perisho, this shows an acceptance of Jesus' authority based on Matthew 28:18-20 which says, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."²⁴ Perisho contends that the first evidence of effectiveness in the battle against Satan is his retaliation.

"Can Prayer Cut New Mexico's Crime?" is the title of an article printed in *Christianity Today Magazine* . . .

Prayer is the sheriff's latest tool against street crime in San Juan County, New Mexico. In March Sheriff Michael Davidson enlisted 90 local churches of all faiths—Protestant, Catholic, and Mormon—to pray for their rural community in the state's lightly populated, scenic northwest corner.

"The San Juan County Sheriff's Office is concerned with the direction that our community and society, in general, are heading in regard to crime and other social ills," Davidson wrote to pastors in his March 13 letter, printed on sheriff's department stationary. Davidson asked for prayer against pornography, illegal drugs, and domestic violence, and in support of local-enforcement efforts.

Davidson also sent a copy of *Transformations*, a 60-minute video produced by The Sentinel Group in Lynnwood, Washington, that documents exceptional changes in four cities after concerted intercessory prayer.

In the meantime, besides an awakening to prayer, have any changes come to rural San Juan County? "It's too soon to see a change in the crime level," Davidson says. But rather than watching for rapid

²⁴ Ibid., 8.

results, churches in San Juan County are extending their prayer vigils for the long haul.”²⁵

The above article clearly demonstrates the simplicity of a group of sincere people who came together on behalf of their community to pray to God. There is no mention of naming and calling forth demons or principalities; only concerned citizens who have a burden for the well-being of their community and its people, and who obviously have enough faith to trust Almighty God to change their plight.

Barbara Apgar reported in the *American Family Physician Journal* that in a 1988 study, there was a report that intercessory prayer had a statistically significant beneficial effect on the hospital course of patients in a coronary care unit (CCU). In an attempt to replicate these findings, a study was conducted to evaluate whether intercessory prayer had an effect on complications and the duration of hospital stay in CCU patients.²⁶

The 990 CCU patients in the study were randomly assigned by the hospital chaplain’s secretary to a prayer group (466 patients) or a group for whom intercessory praying was not done (524 patients). After a patient was assigned to the prayer group, an intercessory prayer team leader was called and given the first name of the patient. The team leader then called four other members of the team. There were 15 teams of five members each. Other than the patient’s first name, no information about the patient was given to the intercessors, and patients did not know that the prayers were being made for them.²⁷

²⁵ *Christianity Today*, 12 June 2000, 20.

²⁶ “Intercessory Prayer and Patient Outcomes in Coronary Care Units,” *American Family Physician* 61, no. 3 (Feb 1, 2000): 813; available from <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20000201/tips/13.html>; Internet; accessed August 24, 2005.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

The authors concluded that supplementary, remote, blinded, intercessory prayer produced a measurable improvement in the medical outcomes of critically ill patients in the CCU. The authors also noted that more studies are needed to validate the findings of this and other studies and to explore the potential role of prayer as an adjunct to standard medical care.²⁸ The editor of the article also noted that because of its subject, this study stands out like a red flag in a highly respected scientific journal and that the fact that an article of this kind is even published in a scientific journal is noteworthy.²⁹

Another concept of prayer that is rooted in simplicity and sincerity is found in the prayer tradition of Black people. In his book, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, Harold A. Carter describes how prayer has undergirded and directed the significant work of Black people in bringing changes to social and political paradigms in the United States.³⁰

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., knew the Black person's traditional sense of sincerity under girding prayer when he began publicly to preach the difficult doctrine of "Love Thine Enemy" in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1955 when Dr. King's home was bombed and Black people were ready to react with violence, he checked this potential mobs reaction by saying to those present in front of his home, "Put up your guns; throw away your bricks and bottles; put away your knives. We cannot allow ourselves to fall so low as to adopt the methods of our oppressors. Let us go home and pray for those who hate us, knowing God will see us through."³¹

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995).

³¹ Ibid., 94.

This is an astounding example of the inner release of potentially violent passions and, at the same time, encouragement of the positive and powerful force of prayer. Indeed, through the Montgomery bus boycott, Black prayers were used for inner release of potentially violent reactions, while sustaining some sense of direction toward freedom and the beloved community of all men.³²

This concept of intercessory prayer, although it is not referred to as such, is one that the writer identifies with most because of the power of God to first change the person or people who pray for change. There were many who disagreed with Dr. King's position of non-violence and praying for the oppressor as well as the oppressed and viewed him as a coward. However, the writer believes it takes a person of great courage, strength, and faith to stand boldly on the Word of God that tells us to love our enemies and pray for them regardless of the situation. This does not in any way imply that people of prayer should be passive or docile. It means just the contrary. When God burdens Christians to pray, it is for the purpose of moving God's people toward fulfilling God's divine purpose for that community and nation.

Other sources that contributed to the writer's awareness of the Church's responsibility to intercede on behalf of others were Jeremiah Tillman, *Kingdom Keys: Mobilizing Your Church Through Intercessory Prayer*; E. M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*; Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*; Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*; Larry Lea, *Could You Not Tarry One Hour*; Jim Cymbala, *Break Through Prayer*; Karl Barth, *Prayer*; Dudley Hall, *Incense & Thunder: Experiencing Intimacy and Power with God Through Prayer*; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The*

³² Ibid.

*“Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South; Evelyn Christenson, What Happens
When Women Pray; and O. Hallesby, Prayer.*

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Historical Foundation

In order to establish a clear understanding of certain terms, definitions are provided for “intercessory prayer” and “community.”

Definition of Terms

In his book *Kingdom Keys*, Jeremiah Tillman defines intercessory prayer as “a way of loving others.”¹ When we move to the level of intercessory prayer, we are shifting our center of gravity from our personal needs to the needs of others. Tillman describes the prayer of intercession as selfless and self-giving prayer. The writer believes that Tillman’s description is clear and poignant. How can the Church of God truly engage in intercessory prayer for the community unless there is first a genuine love for those who reside within that community? How can we truly engage unless we consider the needs of others more important than our own?

The word “community” is a broad term, but when defined, it narrows the focus of what this project entails. In his book *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterfeits*, John McKnight concludes that there is not a universally accepted definition

¹ Jeremiah Tillman, *Kingdom Keys: Mobilizing Your Church Through Intercessory Prayer* (Lansing, Illinois: Cross Power Publications, 2003), 14.

for the term “community” and that his reference to an understanding of community is set forth by Alexis de Tocqueville, the French count who visited the United States in 1831. What de Tocqueville found was that European settlers were creating a society different from the one they knew in Europe: communities formed around an uncustomary social invention, small groups of common citizens coming together to form organizations that solved problems.² Plainly stated, McKnight defines community as, “the social place used by family, friends, neighbors, neighborhood associations, clubs, civic groups, local enterprises, churches, ethnic associations, synagogues, local unions, local government, and local media.”³ In addition to the institutions listed by McKnight, the writer would like to include institutions/entities that help to shape the community of Columbus, Georgia. Those institutions are the Muscogee County School Board, the Correctional and Health Care Systems, Columbus Housing Authority, Institutions of Higher Learning, Public Safety Department and local Clergy Associations. These institutions along with those mentioned by McKnight are the institutions/entities that help to shape the lives of the citizens of Columbus, Georgia.

Biblical Intercession Builds Relationship

C. Peter Wagner contends that all forms of intercession are rooted in the biblical conviction that prayer releases God’s power and grace in the lives of those prayed for. In one sense, all prayer can be seen as an end in itself, the end of establishing and deepening relationships with God. In fact, such a relationship of intimacy with God, which involves

² John McKnight, *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1995), 117.

³ Ibid., 164.

both speaking to and hearing from God, is nothing short of a prerequisite for all effective prayer in every facet of the prayer movement. It is an end in itself because it pleases God.⁴

When understood from this point of view, it is clear that prayer must not be regarded as a way through which human beings can manipulate God. This would quickly debase Christian prayer to the level of magic or sorcery, states Wagner. Rather, prayer serves to tune us in as individuals and groups to the love, grace, will, purpose, and timing of God. We also recognize that the fulfillment of God's purpose for particular circumstances in history is, more often than some imagine, contingent by God's own design on the effectiveness of believing prayer. As one prayer leader has said, "History belongs to the intercessors."⁵

The Black Prayer Tradition

If history belongs to the intercessor, this statement certainly holds true for the ancestors of Black religious tradition, which has left many traces of its native influence upon the life-style of its people in America. One of these basic influences has been the habit and impact of prayer. The common practice of prayers among Black slaves in the New World is distinctly noticed in the early days of the Black people's recorded life as slaves.⁶

⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Conforming the Powers* (USA: Regal Books, 1979), 252-53.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 23.

The Praise House

The praise house was a building used widely in the days of slavery, where slaves would gather nightly for the purpose of song, dance, and prayer. Many religious conversion experiences of slaves occurred in these buildings.⁷ The formative impact of prayer in the “praise house” was strong and abiding.⁸

Very likely more than half the population of a plantation is gathered together. Let it be evening, and a light wood fire burns red before the door of the house and on the hearth. For some time one can hear, though at a good distance, the vociferous exhortation of a prayer of the presiding elder or of the brother who has a gift that way . . .⁹

The Special Tree and Praying Ground

The intimacy Black people found in prayer is reflected historically through their special place for prayer. For many, this place was a tree where God’s presence was felt in some deeper and more intimate way.¹⁰ The writer discovered while in West Africa that many Ashanti people believed certain spirits inhabited certain trees and that these trees provided a sacred place for one to communicate with God. The intimate relationship between prayer and field is suggestive of how the slave saw God working through nature

⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁹ Joseph R. Washington, Jr., *Black Sects and Cults* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972), 74-5, quoted in Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, 1995), 28.

¹⁰ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 32.

to provide sustaining power for people. One ex-slave reported the following prayer experience, in which her mother prayed for a place for her children to pray in.¹¹

But I do remember how she used to take us children and kneel down in front of the fireplace and pray. She'd pray that the time would come when everybody could worship the Lord under their own vine and fig tree . . . all of them free. It's come to me lots of times since. There she was a' praying, and on other plantations women was a' praying. All over the country the same prayer was being prayed. Guess the Lord done heard the prayer and answered it.¹²

Prayer for the slaves was the important spiritual pursuit of their lives. In the praise house, they danced, shouted, and prayed at night. In the day, behind a hoe, pushing a saw in the forest or clearing a field, the need of God was truly uppermost in their minds. They saw their God revealing things to them in dreams, visions, songs, and prayers. While no massive missionary movement had been directed toward reaching the slaves, a movement of even greater proportions was taking place in their souls. They gradually became acquainted with the Bible, receiving theological and biblical influences that had a far-reaching impact upon their lives. This impact was seen in their concept of God and of themselves. The name of Jesus, the power of the church, and the hope of eternal life were pillars of salvation. Prayer and praise in a far greater sense provided for them a vital source for the affirmation of life.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 33.

¹² Rawick, vol. 10, part 6, 64., quoted in Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 33.

¹³ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 34.

The Black Prayer Tradition as a Weapon of Social Change

The Apostle Paul wrote his letters to the church in a particular location, such as Galatia, Colossae, and Thessalonica (Galatians 1:2, Colossians 4:15, I Thessalonians 1:1). The regular meetings of Christians were in someone's house, which was the case much of the time in early church history. Stott informs us in his book, *Obeying Christ in a Changing World*, that the church in some way belongs in and to the local community and that to some extent, the church is representative, praying on behalf of the neighborhood- and so it will pray about specific local social, political, and industrial needs.¹⁴

No study of the civil rights movement of Black people from slavery until today would be complete without acknowledging the undergirding force of prayer in changing social conditions. This prayer tradition has historically motivated and given cohesion to the liberation drive of Black people. It has been used by Black women to instill hope in the lives of their children and provide ways to freedom for youth and adults alike. It has undergirded national movements, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Opportunities Industrialization Centers, the efforts of ministers in local communities, and the calling of attention to social injustices. This prayer tradition remains as a spiritual platform on which broad elements of the Black community can gather to express common concerns to the broader community.¹⁵

¹⁴ John Stott, *Obeying Christ in a Changing World* (London: Collins-World, 1977), 52.

¹⁵ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 99.

Liberation Through Prayer

When Israel was in Egypt's land, slaves under Pharaoh turned to the one power available, prayer. When Black people were in bondage in America, they, too, turned to prayer. The hard forces of a cruel and inhuman existence forced on them the necessity to pray. They quickly made the transition from ancestral African religion to the almighty name of Jesus. The available images of life exalted the White man and oppressed the Black man. In a world like this, the Black community found hope in prayer. The Black men and women used this spiritual force to carve avenues of liberation for themselves and their fellow citizens.¹⁶

Henry "Box" Brown, a slave from Richmond, Virginia, told how his mother instilled in him the power of prayer, eventually leading to his liberation.¹⁷

. . . my sister became anxious to have her soul converted, and shaved the hair from her head, as many of the slaves thought they could not be converted without doing this. My mother reproved her, and began to tell her of God who dwelt in heaven, and that she must pray to him to convert her.¹⁸

Henry "Box" Brown never forgot what his mother said. It stirred in him the belief that God could direct his escape from bondage if he would ask Him in sincerity.¹⁹

At length, after praying earnestly to Him, who seeth afar off, for assistance, in my difficulty, suddenly, as if from above, there darted into my mind these words, "Go and get a box, and put yourself into it." I pondered the words over in my mind. "Get a box?" though I; "what can this mean?" But I was "not disobedient unto the

¹⁶ Ibid., 100.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Charles Stearns, "Narrative of Henry Box Brown" (1849): 17-8, quoted in Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 100.

¹⁹ Ibid.

heavenly vision,” and I determined to put into practice this direction, as I considered it, from my heavenly Father.²⁰

Henry “Box” Brown executed his idea, and arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, “praising God from whom all blessings flow!” By his own testimony, the seed for freedom was given him by the prayerful instruction of his mother.²¹

Nat Turner, the celebrated insurrectionist of Southhampton County, Virginia, declared that all of his instructions came from God. He believed God had some special purpose for him. His peers thought he was a prophet with divine wisdom. He stated that all his “time, not devoted to my master’s service, was spent either in prayer, or in making experiments in casting differing things in molds made of earth, in attempting to make paper, gunpowder, and many other experiments, which, although I could not perfect, yet convinced me of their practicability, if I had the means.”²²

Knowing the influence I had obtained over the minds of my fellow-servants (not by conjuring and such like tricks, for to them I always spoke of such things with contempt), but by the communion of the Spirit, whose revelations I often communicated to them; and they believed and said my wisdom came from God. I now began to prepare them for my purpose, by telling them something was about to happen that would terminate in fulfilling the great promise that had been made to me.²³

The liberating relevance of the Black prayer tradition reached its modern-day summit in the heroic life and philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. During the days of

²⁰ Ibid., 59, quoted in Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 100.

²¹ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 100.

²² Thomas C. Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner, Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southhampton, Va.* (1969), 4, quoted in Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 103.

²³ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 103.

his leadership, prayer was an integral part of every struggle, meeting, and decision. In Montgomery, Alabama, the traditional prayer meeting served to bring together an oppressed people under a bold new philosophy—nonviolence based on Christian love. The songs of slavery came alive, matched with the thrust of spontaneous prayers for enemies and for freedom. Suddenly, people of all colors and creeds began to take notice, as the prayers of former slave children were ringing out from jails, courthouses, streets, and churches.²⁴

The Black prayer tradition, so effectively used in the Montgomery bus boycott, was the rallying point for ministers and Christian laypersons during later struggles for freedom and true brotherhood in Albany, Georgia, Birmingham and Selma, Alabama and Washington, D.C. Dr. King issued calls from all of these cities for ministers to hold local prayer vigils against segregation and human injustices in local cities across the nation.²⁵

Harold A. Carter, the author of *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, was one of Dr. King's former associates who recalled similar experiences of prayer in the city of Lynchburg, Virginia. This conservative city, nestled in the hills of Virginia, had strong walls of segregation that needed to be torn down. On several occasions, White ministers heeded the call to join with Black ministers to pray in front of courthouses or in front of jails where protesters were held, making a witness for love and brotherhood. "What we were doing in Lynchburg was happening in many cities around the country. The time was now ripe for a massive prayer pilgrimage to the nation's Capitol."²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 106.

²⁵ Ibid., 110.

²⁶ Ibid., 112.

At noon on May 17, 1957, thirty-seven thousand marchers, including three thousand white sympathizers, assembled in front of the Lincoln Memorial. They were addressed by almost all the important black leaders of the day. It was about three o'clock when A. Philip Randolph introduced Martin to make the closing address. This was the first of Martin's inspiring political speeches to a national audience.²⁷

The significance of this massive rally, billed as a "Prayer Pilgrimage," is at least fourfold. First, it brought together for the first time on a national platform the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Second, it set the tone for the mammoth rally six years later, for which it was the indispensable rehearsal. Third, it provided a national and international platform for Dr. King to call the nation to repentance and sound justice. Fourth, it again proved the strength of the Black prayer tradition in providing for people from all walks of life a common anchor to pursue goals beneficial to all persons.²⁸ Without monetary or political power, Black people still found through prayer a creative release for their frustrations. They learned how to take their burdens to the Lord and leave them there.²⁹

The Prayer Tradition Continues

In Linda Thomas' book, *Under The Canopy: Ritual Process and Spiritual Resilience in South Africa*, she talks about an interview she had with Banzi. At the time he was interviewed by Dr. Thomas, Banzi was a 31-year-old man who had been at St

²⁷ Coretta Scott King, *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (1969): 159, quoted in Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 112.

²⁸ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 112.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 129.

John's-Guguletu for nine months and was a devoted member of the church.³⁰ This interview also came shortly after Nelson Mandela's release from prison and the repeal of the final pillars of apartheid. Even though apartheid was no longer legal, it still had a firm grip on the nation, particularly its intellectual, psychosocial, political, and economic life. With apartheid's legal, political, and economic infrastructure having solidified over a period of 80 years, it was impossible to dismantle in a short time.³¹

Banzi not only linked violence and apartheid, but he also explained the ways prayer assisted him in everyday life.

Apartheid affected me very much because some members of my family are in jail. Some members of my family died, so it is something that affects my life. It has been very bad for me. For example, when I went to Johannesburg looking for work, there was a time when we were in the train and the soldiers and policemen came and hit and shot us. I used to pray very hard because every day when I went to work I didn't know if I was coming back. So I prayed and God helped me a lot because I'm still alive.³²

I can say that my church plays a big role in my prayers. I pray for myself because there is so much violence. I was one of the people on the train and didn't know that the soldiers were hitting people and killing people who were on board. When I got off, I found out that there was a problem on the train. You see, God helps me a lot. I prayed there. I also thanked my church because there was a problem and God helped me. God helps me a lot. But I also play a big role because I pray for myself. Yes, I was safe. There was also a time that I didn't have a ticket in my hand, but I just looked down and I found a ticket. I gave it to them because otherwise they would hit me. Others had nothing to give them. We had to push to get off the train. I can say, I praise my God because he helped me

³⁰ Linda Elain Thomas, *Under the Canopy* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

³² Kiernan (1977b), on the basis of work in KwaMashu, describes the dangers that AIC members confronted while riding trains between black townships in KwaMashu and central Durban. Zionists held religious services during the train rides to manage risk and tension. Banzi likewise reflects that religious belief helped him to arrive safely at his destinations, quoted in Linda E. Thomas, *Under The Canopy* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 38.

with that problem. Even the ticket I picked up from the floor, I know that God helped me to get this ticket because I just found it and gave it to the soldier. Then I was safe.³³

Without monetary, social or political power, Banzi still found through prayer a release for his frustration. He learned through the help of his church how to take his burdens to the Lord and leave them there.

Can Communities Be Changed Through Intercessory Prayer?

“Attorney blames drugs, Walker . . . ‘The facts of this case have been ignored,’ Hagler says, were the headline for the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer newspaper dated Saturday, February 28, 2004. In the most extended defense of his client to date, Columbus attorney, Richard Hagler said former sheriff’s deputy David Glisson never intended on taking the life of Kenneth B. Walker.”³⁴ “David Glisson is innocent of any wrongdoing,” said the veteran defense attorney, who predicted on Friday that his client would be exonerated following the outcome of all existing investigations. Hagler said it was decisions made by Walker on Dec. 10 that “were responsible for creating the circumstances surrounding this tragedy.”³⁵

Glisson, a 48-year-old former Muscogee County deputy sheriff, fatally shot unarmed Walker, 39, following a stop along Interstate I-85 shortly before 9 p.m. Prior to being stopped, Walker and three friends—Warren Beulah, Anthony Smith and Daryl Ransom—had been riding in a gray GMC Yukon seen leaving Northwoods Apartments on

³³ Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 38.

³⁴ Muriel Tan, “Attorney blames drugs, Walker,” *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, 28 February 2004, sec. A, 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Armour Road. The apartment was under surveillance by Metro Narcotics Task Force agents, according to officials.³⁶ The men were ordered from the vehicle by a group of Sheriff's Department Special Response Team members called in to assist Metro and, in the ensuing moments, Walker was shot twice in the head. He was pronounced dead about four hours later at the medical center.³⁷

Although similar tragedies are not uncommon to many of our cities across the country, it would be interesting to find out to what degree intercessory prayer can change the life of a community where wrong seems right and right seems wrong. Can prayer actually change the community of Columbus? Remember what was happening in New Mexico at the same time that an incomprehensible tragedy was occurring in Columbus. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Sheriff of San Juan County, New Mexico enlisted ninety local churches of all faiths to pray for their rural community in an effort to reduce serious crime by enlisting concerted intercessory prayer.³⁸

What took place in San Juan County was the result of what the Old and New Testaments have commanded God's people to do in order that the world may see the Kingdom of God established on earth in the hearts of all men. Seeing the community changed is not something the Columbus House of Church can do in and of itself. However, the Bible says “. . . The things impossible with men are possible with God.”³⁹

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Christianity Today*, 12 June 2000, 20.

³⁹ Luke 18:27

Furthermore, the things impossible with men are possible with God through intercessory prayer.

Biblical Foundation

The one thing that is missing at the Columbus House of Hope Church is a united prayer front. When the House of Hope Church clearly understands its call to pray and realizes that it cannot afford not to pray on behalf of others, including the community, the believers of the church will begin to see a remarkable transformation take place not only within the church, but also in the community. This report will attempt to show, through documentation, that when the local church comes together for the purpose of intercession for individuals, groups and institutions within the community, transformation will inevitably take place within the individual and spread into the community.

The Old Testament is filled with references to prayer. "God's people speak to him, call on him, and cry out to him." In addition, a number of words are translated by such expressions as "prayer," "request," "petition," and "intercession."⁴⁰ "Although Adam, Eve, and Cain converse with God in Genesis 3 and 4, the first apparent mention of prayer is in 4:26. After saying that Seth named his son Enosh, the writer concluded," "At that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord."⁴¹

In the Bible, prayer is thought of as communion with God, so long as due emphasis is laid upon divine initiative. "A man prays because God has already touched his

⁴⁰ Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation, 1985), 497.

⁴¹ William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986), 931.

or her spirit.”⁴² Therefore, prayer in the Bible is not a “natural response.” Jesus said in John 4:24, “God is spirit, and those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and truth.”⁴³ In his book entitled *Prayer*, Karl Barth echoes sentiments expressed in the previous paragraph. Barth concludes that Christians are not free to pray or not to pray, or to pray only when we feel so inclined, for prayer is not an act that comes naturally. It is a grace, and this grace can be expected only through the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴

“The biblical doctrine of prayer emphasizes the character of, the necessity of persons being in saving or covenant relation with God, and entering fully into all the privileges and obligations of that relation with God.”⁴⁵ “Prayer in the Old Testament is an expression of personal relationship. This relationship is initiated by God, who is recognized as Creator and Redeemer. The core of the relationship—mutual commitment—is expressed in the Old Testament concept of covenant.”⁴⁶ All this—knowing God as Creator, Redeemer, and Covenant-giver was the basis of the relationship within which God’s Old Testament people approached him in prayer. God’s people experienced the Lord’s limitless power expressed in the material world around them and in history itself, which unfolds according to God’s purpose. The Old Testament believer was dependent on God in everything.

⁴² Inter-Varsity Press, *New Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Illinois, USA: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.), 958.

⁴³ John 4:24

⁴⁴ Karl Barth, *Prayer* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1949, English translation, 1952), 20.

⁴⁵ Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation, 1985), 498.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Along the same vein, in relation to God's covenant relationship with God's people, Dr. George McCalep Jr. states in his book, *Faithful Over a Few Things*, "We are a covenant people, and we have a covenant relationship with God. If God said He will do it, then God will do it, if we keep our end of the relationship."⁴⁷ McCalep continues by stating that, "We have a prayer covenant with God, and God always does His part. We too, must do our part. We must learn to pray in faith."⁴⁸

Thus, most Hebrew terms used in the Old Testament for prayer refer in some sense to petition or supplication. Prayer in the Old Testament more frequently expressed supplication (meaning to ask) than anything else because God's people were keenly aware that because of their covenant relationship, they could go to their God, make their supplication known and God would answer. In Old Testament Scripture petitions were made for rain and fire, relief from famine and plague, resurrections from the dead, and so forth.

"Christian prayer, then, shared a simple belief that God could be petitioned to intervene and effect changes in nature and in the course of world events. The immediate source of this confidence came from the teachings and examples of Jesus, such as the model prayer he offered and the assurance that one had only to ask the Father in order to receive what was needed."⁴⁹

- 2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come.
- 3 "Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴⁷ George O. McCalep Jr., *Faithful Over a Few Things* (Lithonia, Georgia: Orman Press, 1996), 68.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books a division of Baker Book House Co., 49516-6287), 622.

4 “And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”⁵⁰

The church can readily document that Jesus’ instructions were taken to heart by his early followers. There were prayers for the selection of leaders, for deliverances from prisons, for the spread of the gospel, for healings, and so on (e.g., see Acts 1:24; 12:5; 13:3). Paul’s teaching in Philippians 4:6 echoes Jesus’ own. The Apostle Paul commends the church to, “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God.”⁵¹ “Thus, prayer was unquestionably believed to be an effective cause of God’s actions such that a difference resulted in human events.”⁵²

In his book, *Prayer*, O. Hallesby defines prayer as “nothing more involved than to let Jesus into our needs. To pray is to give Jesus permission to employ His powers in the alleviation of our distress. To pray is to let Jesus glorify His name in the midst of our need.”⁵³ In seeking positive social, political and economic change within the community of Columbus, Georgia, this writer agrees with Hallesby’s point that those who pray, and more specifically, the church, gives God permission to intervene and employ the awesome power that only God has in transforming communities into those that will glorify the name of Jesus.

⁵⁰ Luke 11:2-4

⁵¹ Phil.4:6

⁵² Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books a division of Baker Book House Co., 49516-6287), 622.

⁵³ O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 14.

Old Testament Prayer

The Patriarchal Period (Genesis)

In the Patriarchal period, prayer is calling upon the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26; 12:8; 21:33); i.e. the sacred name is used in invocation or appeal. There is, consequently, an unmistakable directness and familiarity in prayer (Genesis 15:2ff.; 18:23ff.; 24:12-14, 26f.). Prayer is also closely connected with sacrifice (Genesis 13:4; 26:25; 28:20-22), although this association appears in later periods as well. This offering of prayer in a context of sacrifice suggests a union of man's will with God's will, an abandonment and submission of the self to God. This is especially so in Jacob's conjoining prayer with a vow to the Lord. The vow, itself a prayer, promises service and faithfulness if the blessing sought is granted (Genesis 28:20ff.).⁵⁴ Prayer in this period was far beyond any primitive magical petitioning of fearsome deities. It was personal and based on God's revelation of Godself. One major example is that of Enoch, whose walk with God must be considered an ideal expansion of prayer into/continuous communion with God (Genesis 5:22-24).⁵⁵

The Pre-exilic Period (Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, I Samuel, I Kings, and Job)

In this period, one of the main emphases in prayer is intercession, although this was also a factor in patriarchal times (Genesis 18:22ff). Intercession was especially prominent in the prayers of Moses (Exodus 32:11-13, 31f.; Numbers 11:11-15;

⁵⁴ *New Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.), 958.

⁵⁵ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 932.

Deuteronomy 9:18-21; 10:10). According to Richard J. Foster in his book entitled, *Prayer: Finding The Heart's True Home*, Moses was one of the world's great intercessors. One particular incident in his life provides a magnificent model for us in our continuing work of intercession. On this occasion, the Amalekites had engaged the children of Israel in battle (Exodus 17:8-13). The military strategy of Moses was strange and powerful. Moses had Joshua lead the army into the valley to fight the battle. Moses himself went to the top of a hill overlooking the battleground with his two lieutenants, Aaron and Hur. While Joshua engaged in physical combat, Moses engaged in spiritual combat by raising hands of prayer over the conflict. Evidently Moses had the harder task, for he was the one who tired. Aaron and Hur had to step in and hold up Moses' arms until the sun set.

In the military annals, Joshua was the commander who won the victory that day. Joshua was the person up front and in the thick of the conflict. Back behind the scenes, the battle of intercession was won by Moses, Aaron, and Hur. Each role was essential for victory. Joshua was needed to lead the charge. Moses was needed to intercede on behalf of the children of Israel. Aaron and Hur were needed to assist Moses, as he grew weary.⁵⁶

Deuteronomy 30 is also largely a prayer of intercession, as are also the prayers of Aaron (Numbers 6:22-27), Samuel (1 Samuel 7:5-13, 12:19, 23), Solomon (1 Kings 8:22-53), and Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:14-19). The inference seems to be that intercession was confined to outstanding personalities who, by virtue of the position assigned to them by God as prophets, priests and kings, had peculiar power in prayer as mediators between God and men. But the Lord always remained free to execute God's will; hence we hear of

⁵⁶ Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 191-92.

unsuccessful intercession (Genesis 18:17ff; Exodus 32:30-35). In Amos 7:1-6, “the Lord repented” concerning a certain course of action in answer to the prophet’s intercession, and in the next verses (7:7-8:2) Israel is to be led away captive after all. Jeremiah is even forbidden to intercede with God (Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11). On the other hand, success attended the intercession of Lot (Genesis 19:17-23), Abraham (Genesis 20:17), Moses (Exodus 9:27-33; Numbers 12:9ff.) and Job (Job 42:8,10). It is the strongly personal relationship with God in which those mediators stood that underlies those intercessory prayers.⁵⁷

The Exilic Period (Daniel and Psalms)

During the Exile, the important factor in religion for God’s people was the emergence of the synagogue. The Jerusalem Temple was in ruins and altar rites and sacrifices could not be performed in unclean Babylon. The center of the religious community was the synagogue and among the acceptable religious obligations such as circumcision, fasting and Sabbath observance, prayer was important. This was inevitable because each little community in exile now depended upon the synagogue service where the Word was read and expounded, and prayers were offered.⁵⁸

During the exile in Babylon, it was apparently the custom of the Jews to pray three times a day (Daniel 6:10 [Matthew 11]; cf. Psalm 55:17 [Matthew 18]). The book of Daniel contains several outstanding prayers. The most exemplary prayer in the book of Daniel and one of the most significant in all Scripture is Daniel’s prayer of intercession in 9:4-19. Daniel begins his prayer in verse three with, “So I gave my attention to the Lord

⁵⁷ *New Bible Dictionary*, 958.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 959.

God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.” Among the elements to be noted in Daniel’s prayer are: (1) the description of God as righteous, merciful and forgiving; (2) the contrasting description of the petitioner and his people as shamefully sinful; (3) their disobedience to the revealed laws of God; (4) a concern for the reputation of God (see esp. vv. 16-19), where God is asked for His own sake and because of God’s great mercy to deliver His people and holy city Jerusalem, which are called by God’s name. Prayer is thus seen as a means of vindicating God and bringing honor to the Lord’s name.⁵⁹

Post-Exilic Period (Ezra, Nehemiah, Psalms, Lamentations, and Zechariah)

After the return to Jerusalem, Ezra pursued his work in an atmosphere of prayer (Ezra 7:27; 8:22f; 9:6-15). Nehemiah began with prayer (Nehemiah 1:5-11) and continued in a prayerful attitude (2:4; 4:4f, 9 [Matthew 3:36f; 4:3]). The confession of sin in 9:5-37 is actually a recitation of Jewish history. Nehemiah’s prayers are a plea partly for divine recognition of his efforts and partly for retribution against the enemy (5:9; 6:14; 13:14, 22, 29,31).⁶⁰

After the Exile, there was undoubtedly a framework of devotion, but within it freedom was secured for the individual. This is exemplified in Ezra and Nehemiah, who, while insisting upon cult and law, and upon ritual and sacrifice and, therefore, upon the social aspects of worship, emphasized also the spiritual factor in devotion (Ezra 7:27; 8:22f; Nehemiah 2:4; 4:4,9). It is also worthy to note that there were no fixed rules

⁵⁹ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 933,

⁶⁰ Ibid.

concerning posture in prayer (Psalm. 28:2; 1 Samuel 1:26; 1 Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5; 1 Kings 18:42; Lamentation 3:41; Daniel 9:3 and v.2; where we should read 'towards' instead of 'for'). The case is the same for hours for prayer: prayer was effective at any time, as well as at the stated hours (Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10). "In the post-exilic period, there was found a blending of orderliness of Temple ritual, the simplicity of the synagogue meeting, and the spontaneity of personal devotion."⁶¹

Prayer, being what it is, would be manifestly impossible to systematize completely. Within the Old Testament, there are certainly patterns for prayer, but no binding regulations governing either its contents or its ritual. Mechanical prayer, prayer hemmed in by coercive prescriptions, did not come until toward the close of the intertestamental period, as the Gospels make clear.⁶²

Development in prayer awaits a new concept of God and this new spirit is felt in the second and third portions of Isaiah. God is God alone, incomparable (ch. 40, etc.). Men and nations are insignificant and therefore may receive from such a God strength and endurance (40:30-31). An impassioned cry that God will act is based on God's mighty acts of old (51:9-11). Abundant pardon is offered to those who will seek the Lord and call on Him, forsaking their wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts because God's thoughts are transcendent and his ways incontestable (ch. 55).⁶³

There is little attention to prayer in the minor prophets of the period. Jonah in his colloquy with God learns of God's interest even in Israel's enemies (ch.4). Joel calls for a solemn fast and assembly led by the priests (1:13-14; 2:12-16; cf. Nehemiah 9:1). Malachi

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1962), 860.

consists chiefly of questions and answers in which prayer has become a sort of formal catechism (1:6-11, etc.). Habakkuk 1:2-4, 12-13; 2:1-4 in C. L. Taylor's rearrangement (IB, VI, 973) is a prayer in which patience is achieved after facing the problem of evil before a holy, immortal God. Zechariah 1-8 finds God to be remote and resorts to the mediation of angels.⁶⁴ No such passage is as explicit as that of Jeremiah 29:7-11, which does more to convey the message of intercessory prayer to the Columbus House of Hope Church than any other.

A Textual Analysis of Jeremiah 29:7

After a review of Old Testament intercession, the writer takes a closer look at the passage from the Old Testament that is the basis for this ministry project. It is Jeremiah 29:7.

And seek the welfare of the City where I have sent you into exile,
and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have
welfare.⁶⁵

Historical Background of Text

God's chosen people (the southern kingdom of Judah) were captured by king Nebuchadnezzar and taken to the city of Babylon. False prophets, who predicted an early return from exile, were responsible for inciting the people to rebel. God told Jeremiah to write to the exiles and assure them that there would be no early release from captivity and that for the next 70 years they had an obligation to the city of Babylon.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Jer. 29:7

In the text as explained by Robert Linthicum, God's message to the exiles through Jeremiah first appears as doom and gloom. The fact that they will be in captivity for the next 70 years implies that many will eventually die in Babylon and never return to Jerusalem. But, God also has good news. The good news is found in verse 7.⁶⁶ "And seek the welfare (shalom) of the city where I have sent you into exile." The Hebrew word for "sent," has no English equivalent and the only way for translators to translate the word "sent" is to approximate it with a bunch of English words that get around the topic, but none of them really hit it squarely because we don't have any words for what's in there. It's important to know what the word "sent" means because it tells us why we are in the city. The Hebrew word actually has two distinct nuances to it. It means exiled. But it also means sent and it is used for an ambassador. It first means exiled—being brought into a city against your will, in spite of your desires and in spite of your wants. This is where God has called you. It is a description of your circumstances. This passage is saying, you are in Babylon because of your circumstances. That is, your nation was defeated, your army was obliterated, your city was burned to the ground, you were clapped into chains, and you were marched over 500 miles of sand into Babylon. That's why you are in Babylon, right? Wrong! Why are you in the city in which you are? This passage also means that you are sent to your city as an ambassador. Why are you in the city you are in now? You are not in the city because you were born there or because you accepted a job there or because you went there to get an education or because your spouse moved there and you thought it would be a good idea to go along with him or her. That's not why you are in the city that you are in. You are in the city that you are in

⁶⁶ Robert Linthicum, Speaker for *Faith in Action in the City* (Dayton, Ohio: Plenary Session I, Part I, United Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Intensive, January 24-28, 2005), Disc 6.

because God has chosen to call you to that city as His ambassador and the way He got you to get there in the first place was to have you born there or to give you a job there so you would have no choice but to go there, or because you spouse moved there and you had no choice, but to move there. God uses our circumstances in order to enable us to carry out the call God has given us. But you as a Christian are in the city in which you live because God has called you there as His ambassador and that's what Jeremiah 29:7 is saying. "Seek the welfare (shalom) of the city where I have sent you," using the circumstance of exile. "Take a look at the city" God is telling these Jewish leaders they have been called to. He is not calling them to Jerusalem, to the city of God. God is saying, "I am calling you to Babylon. I am calling you to the city of evil. I am calling you to the city of wickedness. I am calling you to the city of political oppression. I am calling you to the city of economic exploitation. I am calling you to the city of religious control. That's what I am calling you to." And now the question is, "Okay, God, what do you want me to do?" And God says, "seek the welfare (shalom) of your city." You are to seek the peace, the prosperity, the welfare, the good, the fullness, the wholeness, the spirituality, the depth, the abundance of the city into which I have sent you. That's the job of the church in the city. The job of the church is to work for the total transformation of your city into the kingdom of God. Now the fact is that we already know that when we start the job we're not going to finish it. The kingdom of God is not going to come as a result of our presence in the city. But, we are to work for the coming of the kingdom as if the very coming of the kingdom depended solely upon us. We are called to work for the kingdom in the city of Satan. That's what this passage is telling us. This is the job of the church. The good news for those in captivity is to stop hating the city they are in and give themselves permission to fall in love with it and get out into that community and began

working for its transformation into the city God intends it to be. And if you do that, you will discover your own personal shalom. And you will no longer want to go back home again because you have found home among the people who are God's people even though they don't know it. The *Interpreter's Bible* calls this a revolutionary viewpoint in that Jeremiah showed the Jews that their religion did not depend on residence in the land of Palestine, as previously he had shown it did not depend on the existence of the temple or offering of sacrifices in Jeremiah 7:12-14, 21-22.⁶⁷

12“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the Wickedness of My people Israel.”

13“And now, because you have done all these things,” declares the Lord, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer.”

14“therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.”

21“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat flesh.”

22“For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

23“But this is what I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.”⁶⁸

The speaker then posed the question, if this is true, if the responsibility of the church is to seek the peace of the city in which we have been sent, then how does one go about doing this in the city where they are? Jeremiah said, we are to be God's presence in the city. God's people, according to Linthicum, are not to confine themselves to a remote and isolated place where only they gather. Christians are to get out into the world and

⁶⁷ George Arthur Buttrick, Commentary Editor, *The Interpreter's Bible*, volume V, The Book of Jeremiah (New York: Abingdon Press), 1956.

⁶⁸ Jer. 29:12-14, 21-23

develop relationships with people in the world. We are to begin to work for the transformation of our communities. We are to live and move and have our being as God's people in the city into which God has called us. Christians are to become God's presence in the community. And then, we are to pray on behalf of our cities. Linthicum states that many times we only pray for ourselves and seek our personal well-being. But Jeremiah 29:7 is saying to pray for our cities. We are to pray for the political and economic leaders of our cities. Christians are to pray for the chief executive officers of the major corporations of their cities because they make decisions everyday that radically effect, transform and impact the lives of thousands and thousands of people not just in their corporations, but in corporations around the world and particularly those that are international. Christians are to pray not only for government officials, but also for those who want to be government officials. In addition, pray for religious leaders and those leaders we don't particularly like, even those we consider a sect or cult because they influence thousands and thousands of people. It doesn't matter if they are right or wrong. We are to pray for our cities.

Then the Bible says something else. It says to "seek" the welfare of the city. According to Linthicum, the word "seek" can be translated as "work" for the welfare of our cities. That is, we are not only to be a presence of God in our cities and pray for our cities, but we need to practice our faith in the city.

- Work toward the transformation of our communities,
- Care about those who are hungry, thirsty and naked,
- Feed and care for them,
- Provide social services,

- Stand up for them when they are apparently unable to stand up for themselves,
- Be their advocates.

We are called to community and economic development. We are to be building homes for Habitat for Humanity.

Joseph S. Exell, writer for the *Biblical Illustrator*, believes that the “best Christians make the best citizens.” Exell continues by stating that Christians who seek the peace of the city know that the prosperity of the whole is their own prosperity and they do not, therefore, selfishly seek their own advantage. But they actually labor with all diligence for the furtherance of the common good because our own individual good is intimately connected with the general happiness and prosperity of our land.⁶⁹ Therefore, we are to be God’s presence, proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to those in our communities, practice our faith by responding to the needs of the people in the community and pray for the city. These are the four essentials of seeking the welfare of the city.

However, Linthicum continued his exposition of Jeremiah 29:11 by adding that presence, practice, proclamation and prayer for our communities is not enough to bring about change. Power must be utilized if we want to see change within our communities. Linthicum defined power as having the capacity, ability and willingness to act. He believed that change within a community cannot occur unless God’s people have developed the capacity, ability and willingness to act upon those things, which inherently affect the well-being of the city and its people in a negative way.

⁶⁹ Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973).

New Testament Intercessory Prayer

The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)

The Gospels tell not only why, but also how Jesus prayed. Notably Jesus prayed at all the important events in His life, e.g., His baptism (Luke 3:21), the Transfiguration (Luke 9:29), and His vigil in the Garden of Gethsemane before the Crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-46 par. Matthew 14:32-43; Luke 22:39-46). Some of Jesus' prayers were thanksgivings to God (John 6:11; 11:41; Matthew 26:27 par., at the Last Supper). Other prayers were intercessions. Jesus prayed especially for Peter before His passion (Luke 22:31f.). His prayer was answered. Although Peter's faith faltered, it did not fail completely (vv. 54-62). Jesus also interceded for others while on the cross (23:34).

The gospel of Mark records only that Jesus prayed at critical moments and that it may be assumed that Jesus joined in synagogue prayer (1:21; 6:2; etc.) and in the customary prayers at home celebrations like the Passover (14:17-26). Mark does not tell us that Jesus prayed at His baptism (1:9-11), though the heavens were opened to Him and Jesus heard the voice, nor in the wilderness (1:12), nor at the Transfiguration (9:2). Jesus' disciples are criticized for not keeping a fast (2:18; cf. Luke 5:33: "and offer prayers").⁷⁰

Mark also states that Jesus retired from Capernaum to pray before announcing his preaching tour (1:35-38), that the Lord went alone into the hills to pray after feeding the multitude (6:46; but not 8:10), that Jesus prayed in Gethsemane before his arrest (14:36, 39), and that the Lord prayed on the cross (15:34, in the words of Ps. 22:1). From this, it is possible to deduce a custom of prayer in emergencies, before great decisions, and in

⁷⁰ *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1962), 862.

retirement. Mark gives no written prayers of Jesus except in Gethsemane (14:36) and from the cross (15:34), though his table blessings are mentioned at 6:41 (cf. 8:6); 14:22-23. Prayer is assumed at 7:34. Mark's emphasis is upon prayer in the critical moments.⁷¹

The apostle Luke is interested in prayer and has expanded Mark 1:10 by, "and was praying" (Luke 3:21) and makes the same addition to Mark 3:13 (6:12) which has no parallel to 6:46. Luke also tells us it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath (4:16). However, Luke omits from Mark 1:35 that Jesus prayed, perhaps assuming that the lonely place indicated this (4:42), and makes up this deficiency at 6:12 before his version of the Sermon, thus also relating prayer to Jesus' preaching mission. As Mark makes no reference to prayer for power to heal, Luke explains that the power of the Lord was with Jesus (5:17). Luke also adds that Jesus was praying privately at Caesarea Philippi (9:18), but omits the reference to prayer and exorcism in Mark 9:29 referring instead to the majesty of God (9:43). Unlike Matthew, Luke 11:1 informs us that it was the example of Jesus' own prayers that prompted the Lord's Prayer. Luke 22:32 is the only intercession of Jesus except for the Lukan insertion of the prayer from the cross in some readings of 23:34. In place of prayer from Psalm 22, Luke alone has: "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (23:46).⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid, 862-63.

⁷² Ibid.

Prayer in the Early Church
(Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians,
Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, II Timothy,
Philemon, I Peter and Revelation)

According to Paul, a Christian prays and practices prayer in its fullness. In his letters, Paul's concern for Christians and their problems is lifted up to God. Almost every letter begins and ends with "grace" (I Thessalonians 1:1; 5:28; etc.). All except Galatians and II Corinthians begin with an expression of thanksgiving for his readers and an assurance of constant prayer on their behalf (Romans 1:8-9; I Cor. 1:4; Philippians 1:3-4; Col. 1:3-5, 9; I Thessalonians 1:2; 3:9; II Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; Philemon 4-6). Paul not only petitions, but also gives thanks, and states the ground of a particular request and its aim. The principal prayers are in Romans 15:5-6, 13; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12; I Thessalonians 3:11-13; 5:23; and II Thessalonians 1:11-12; 2:16-17; 3:16.⁷³ Paul views the ground of prayer as being established in the revelation of God in Christ: in whom all the promises of God and of Christ (Romans 15:5; I Corinthians 1:9; I Thessalonians 5:24; II Thessalonians 3:3), on Christ's power (Colossians 1:11; II Thessalonians 1:11), and, above all, on the superabundance of God's provision in Christ (Romans 10:12; II Corinthians 9:89; Philippians 4:19).⁷⁴ Notably, in Paul the Holy Spirit is the motivating power of prayer. The Spirit bears witness with the spirit of a person (Romans 8:16, 27) and causes that person to set his or her mind on the things of the Spirit (vs. 5). Since the Spirit alone knows the mind of God (I Corinthians 2:10-12; cf. Romans

⁷³ Ibid., 864.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

8:27), the Spirit can intercede for people and actually teach them to pray (Romans 8:26-27), interpreting to God their inarticulate sighs according to God's will.⁷⁵

The apostle Paul often prayed for joy (Romans 15:13) and peace (II Thessalonians 3:16) for the saints. In the nature of God, Paul found the cause of thanksgiving and praise for God's grace and comfort (I Corinthians 1:4); for God's revelation (Romans 16:25-27); God's inexpressible gift (II Corinthians 9:15); and for the fact that in Christ he leads us in triumph (II Corinthians 2:14) to the hope of heaven and the inheritance of the saints (Colossians 1:5, 12). Paul also gives thanks for his people, for their faith and growth in love and their share in the work of the gospel (Romans 1:8; I Corinthians 1:5,7; Philippians 1:5; Colossians 1:4; I Thessalonians 1:2; 2:13; II Thessalonians 1:3-4; Philemon 5).⁷⁶

Paul both prays and asks prayer for his mission (Romans 10-1; I Thessalonians 3:10-11; II Thessalonians 3:1-2). Paul's prayers, grounded in the faith, have a purpose. Paul seeks the glory of God and of Christ. Paul's aim is a life worthy of Christ (Colossians 1:10), in which anxiety will, through prayer, give place to peace (Philippians 4:6-7; cf. I Peter 5:7) and many will give thanks for the demonstrated effectiveness of prayer (II Corinthians 1:11). Except for his intercessions, Paul says little of his own prayers, only to hint at mystical experiences of which he dare not boast (II Corinthians 12:1-4) and to invite people to "strive together" with him in prayer on Paul's behalf (Romans 15:30).⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

The Pauline Epistles are characterized by an opening expression of thanksgiving (Romans 1:8f.; I Corinthians 1:4-9; 2 Corinthians 1:3f.; Ephesians 1:15f.; Philippians 1:3-10; Colossians 1:3-14; I Thessalonians 1:2f.; 2 Thessalonians 1:3). Of the Pastorals, only II Timothy follows this pattern (1:3). Prayers, indirect prayers (e.g., “may God . . .,” with the third person used), and assurances of prayer (“I pray for you . . .”) appear throughout Paul’s letters. The prayers vary (thanksgivings, blessings, intercessions, etc.), with intercessions predominating.⁷⁸

In addition to some major sections in the Epistles, Paul makes a number of significant individual statements about prayer. It is to be constant (I Thessalonians 5:17); it is a part of the spiritual battle (Romans 15:30, “strive together . . . in your prayers;” cf. Colossians 2:1 and 4:12, where the word for striving is often lost in translation); it is important in the spiritual warfare, along with the Christian’s armor and the Word of God (Ephesians 6:13-18).⁷⁹

The great contribution of Hebrews is its teaching on the earthly prayer life and heavenly intercession of Christ. While on the earth, Jesus prayed with great emotion and God was receptive to Jesus’ prayers.⁸⁰ James 1:5-7 encourages prayer for wisdom, provided that one prays with confidence. James 5:13-18 is a major passage on prayer. According to this passage, persons who are sick can call the elders, who will pray over

⁷⁸ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 935, 936.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 937.

them. The passage goes on to emphasize the effectiveness of prayer by righteous persons.⁸¹

I John 3:21f encourages confidence in God when one prays as a believer who has a clear conscience and who is obedient to God. Assurance that prayer will be answered is possible for those who pray according to God's will (v. 14). Revelation 4-5 describes prayerful worship of God and of the Lamb in heaven. The bowls of incense held by the four living creatures and the elders symbolize the "prayers of the saints" (5:8). Further thanksgiving is expressed in 11:16-18; 15:3f. (the songs of Moses and the Lamb); 16:5-7; and 19:1-8. The book and Scripture itself conclude with a prayer, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (22:20), and with a benediction (v.21).⁸²

The New Testament passage that resonates with the writer and is relevant to the ministry project is found in I Timothy 2:1-3.

Textual Analysis of I Timothy 2:1-3

Concerning prayer, Lawrence Richards makes this statement: ". . . The biblical doctrine of prayer emphasizes the character of, the necessity of a man's being in saving or covenant relationship with God, and his entering fully into all the privileges and obligations of that relationship with God."⁸³ It is obvious that Richards clearly understood that believers not only receive certain privileges as a result of prayer, but also that because

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corp., 1985), 498.

of our covenant relationship with God, believers are obligated to pray. Richards' statement concerning our obligation to pray is magnified in I Timothy 2:1-3:

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ²for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.⁸⁴

The keynote of verses 1-4 is the universal relevance of the Christian faith; it is for all people, even for kings and all who are in high positions. Verse 1 is grounded in verses 3-6: since, "there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all," and since God "desires all men to be saved" the churches should pray (publicly) for [the conversion of] all men, including royalty. Should public recognition of the secular authority be made in the public prayers? According to the *Interpreter's Bible*, we should not suppose that the continuation of the Jewish practice of prayer and sacrifice for heathen rulers (see Jeremiah 36:7; Baruch 1:10-13; Ezra 6:10; I Maccabees 7:33) would be maintained by the church as a matter of course. The book of Revelation shows with what horror the empire and its rulers were viewed in some circles of the church. It may well have been that the question of public prayer for the emperor was a burning one in the churches to which these letters were written. The answer given is that (public) prayers should be made for secular rulers.⁸⁵

The expression "kings, and all who are in high positions" is so phrased as to include emperors, local or petty kings, and all superior government officials. In the Orient, "king" meant emperor and among Greeks it designated sovereignty in general.

⁸⁴ I Tim. 2:1-3

⁸⁵ George Arthur Buttrick, Commentary Editor, *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955, Volume 11), 396-397.

Whether or not the clause is an actual quotation from an early Christian prayer, it is used in the context to formulate a principle for universal application.⁸⁶

According to Clifton Allen, the universality of prayer in I Timothy 2:1-4 applies to kings and all who are in high positions. The word rendered “kings” was used in the East to designate the emperor. Because “kings” is plural, F. C. Baur and others have argued that the letters were composed after A.D. 136 when there were two emperors. In this context, however, the word has a more general application, including the emperor and various local monarchs who served as his lieges (subjects). Prayer for the emperor contrasted with worship of him. The practice of prayer reflected Christian fidelity to established institutions and the belief that power for orderly government came from God (cf. Romans 13:1ff.; John 19:11; I Peter 2:13ff. Tertullian, *Apol.* 40).⁸⁷

The aim of the prayer would not be the conversion of the emperor, but the welfare of the state, that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Paul has in mind not only the danger of persecution, but also that of attacks by “demonic powers” as mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 (Barrett). According to ancient psychology, demonic beings controlled the sphere around the earth and wreaked havoc on human life. In the Christian view, however, humanity needs not despair because in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God overcame these hostile forces and equipped men to vanquish them. Prayer could put at one’s disposal this divine aid.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid., 398.

⁸⁷ Clifton J. Allen, General Editor, *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, Volume 11, 2 Corin.-Phile. (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1971), 312.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 313.

In his book, *What the Bible Teaches*, R. A. Torrey candidly proposes that, “We should pray for our rulers.” It is to be feared that most Christians today are grievously disobedient to God at this point. The present fashion is to rail at our rulers. This is in direct disobedience to God’s Word (Jude 8:9, R.V.; 2 Peter 2:10, 11; 1 Peter 2:17). Christians can accomplish far more for “good government” by praying than by railing at the powers that be. Then, according to Torrey, “We should pray for the city where we live. A Christian should be interested in all lands and in all places. But we have a special responsibility and duty in prayer, as well as service, toward the place where God puts us (Jeremiah 29:7).”⁸⁹

Theological Foundation

Prayer remains one of the mysteries of our faith. Yet prayer is a simple act and a comfort to believers, who from the beginning, have turned with confidence and faith to God. The mysteries are theoretical:

How can prayer “change” the mind of God or modify events? How does prayer relate to divine sovereignty? Scripture hardly notices such questions. Instead, the Bible emphasizes the simplicity of prayer. Believers are to pray about everything; confident that God hears prayers, cares, and is able to act.⁹⁰

Upon surveying biblical texts in the Old and New Testaments, it is conclusive that the texts show prayer, and more specifically intercessory prayer, is based on the revelation of the nature and attributes of God. The initiative in prayer is a response to multiple explicit and implicit invitations of God. Confidence is possible because God desires prayer

⁸⁹ R. A. Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches* (Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898-1933), 422.

⁹⁰ Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corp., 1985), 496.

and because it is in the nature and character of God to answer prayer.⁹¹ “Although there are certain qualifications or conditions for prayer, the effective power of prayer does not ultimately reside in prayer itself, but in the One to whom prayer is made. In the same way, the purpose of prayer is not merely to bring good to people, but to bring glory to God. Honoring God always brings blessings to mankind, because God desires the good of those who were created and especially to those whom the Lord redeemed. Jesus’ words, ‘But seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you,’⁹² certainly can apply to prayer.”⁹³ “Priority is always given to praise and the goal of honoring God through the extension of God’s kingdom and the realization of God’s will on earth.”⁹⁴

If intercessory prayer is thus grounded in God, it follows that to pray, those involved must have a proper and vital relationship with God. One must, of course, believe that God exists, but also that one’s very coming brings its own reward (Hebrews 11:6). The greatest reward is not in the receiving of gifts, but in a deeper experience of the Giver. This relationship must be intimate and continuing, a relationship described in John 15:7 as “abiding” in Christ. One may be driven to prayer because of need, but one remains in prayer because of God Himself.⁹⁵

Who is this God and what do we know about the One with whom we must have a proper relationship if we are to expect the hearing and answering of our prayers?

⁹¹ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1986), 937.

⁹² Matt. 6:33

⁹³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 937.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

In summary, God is a living, personal Spirit worthy of whole-soul adoration and trust (because of His many perfect attributes), separate from the world, and yet continuously active in the world. Unlimited by space, God nevertheless created and sustains the cosmos, scientific laws, and geographical and political boundaries. Beyond time, God nevertheless actively relates to time, to each human life, home, city, nation, and to human history in general. Transcendent to discursive knowledge and conceptual truth, God nevertheless intelligently relates to propositional thought and verbal communication, objective validity, logical consistency, factual reliability, coherence and clarity, as well as subjective authenticity and existential integrity.⁹⁶

Unlimited by a body, God is nevertheless providentially related to physical power in nature and society, industrially, agriculturally, socially, and politically. God knows and judges human stewardship in the use of all the earth's energy resources. God transcends every attempt to achieve justice in the world, but righteously relates to every good endeavor of his creatures personally, economically, socially, academically, religiously, and politically. Although free from unworthy and uncontrolled emotions; God is caringly related to the poor, the unfortunate, the lonely, the sorrowing, the sick, the victims of prejudice, injustice, anxiety, and despair. Beyond all the apparent meaninglessness and purposelessness of human existence, God personally gives significance to the most insignificant life.⁹⁷ According to the Scripture, God is known only through self-revelation. Apart from God's initiative in disclosure, God could not be known by man (I Corinthians 2:10-11).⁹⁸

According to Lawrence Richards, prayer, then, "is the appeal of a child who recognizes his or her dependence. It is made to an all-powerful person who cares. It is

⁹⁶ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 459.

⁹⁷ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 459.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

not surprising that Old Testament prayers are personal, often motivated by need, and beautiful in their childlike simplicity.”⁹⁹ Moreover, prayer in the Old Testament is a spontaneous expression. God can be approached at any time, in any place. It is significant that the Old Testament presents no prayer liturgy. Richards contends that prayer for Christians is not a matter of ritual as with some religions. Prayer is a living, vital expression of relationship. Thus, true prayer is always a matter of the heart (Jeremiah 29:12-14), while false or meaningless prayer is only a matter of the lips (Isaiah 29:13; cf. 1:15-17; Amos 5:23-24).¹⁰⁰

The elements basic to the Old Testament prayer are carried over into the New Testament, where they are given even richer expression. In the New Testament, prayer is related to the intimate relationship that the believer sustains with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Prayer and the Father

Jesus condemns a ritualistic, hypocritical approach to prayer and presents true prayer as an intimate expression of relationship with a God who is one's Father (Matthew 6:5-8). Jesus' model prayer, known to us as the Lord's Prayer, sums up the beautiful relationship we have with God:

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but

⁹⁹ Lawrence A. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corp., 1985), 498.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.¹⁰¹

We approach God as we would a parent. We acknowledge and praise the Lord as the hallowed one in heaven. We express our joyful submission to God's will. We acknowledge our dependence on the Lord for material and spiritual sustenance and we ask for forgiveness. We acknowledge God's right to direct our lives (Matthew 6:9-13).

Shortly after Jesus taught his disciples this prayer, the Lord assured them by explaining the freedom from worry that believers have: "Your heavenly Father knows [what you need] (Matthew 6:32). Coming in prayer to a God who is Father and resting in all that this means; we are free to 'seek first his kingdom and his righteousness'" (v. 33).¹⁰²

Nowhere else do we see a clearer picture of an understanding of Jesus' teaching of God as Father than we do in the prayer tradition of Black people. According to Harold Carter, in his book, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, the nature and being of God in the Black prayer tradition is best understood when one pictures God as a heavenly Father who is all powerful, who rules the universe, and who controls all people. Almost always the traditional Black prayer opens with a line addressed specifically to "Almighty God." God is often pictured as the one who "sits high and looks low and knows every thought and action of a person." God is also seen in Black prayers as being "too high to get over, too low to get under, too wide to get around, so that one comes to God through the door." Over and over again, God is seen in this prayer tradition as being able to "open doors no person can close, and close doors no person can open. God can build up where

¹⁰¹ Matt. 6:9b-13

¹⁰² Ibid., 499.

no man can tear down, and can tear down where no man can build up.” All of these prayer lines are deeply rooted in the language of traditional Black prayers and may be heard repeatedly.¹⁰³

Benjamin E. Mays summarizes the ideas of God in Black prayer as follows:

God is in heaven. The Lord is all powerful—the source of all things even to allowing us to go to bed and to rise in the morning. In allowing us to do this, God displays mercy. God is a rock in a weary land and a shelter in a mighty storm. All that happens is the Lord’s will. God is a partial God who is to be feared and appeased. God does things arbitrarily, apparently for no other reason than the fact that God is all powerful and can do what God pleases.¹⁰⁴

Throughout his book, Carter illustrates the notion that slaves commonly believed that a personal relationship with God was absolutely necessary. God had to be known at this level, so that the supportive sense of God’s presence could provide a lift for life’s burdens and encounters. Therefore, the Black people saw God rocking them to sleep at night and awakening them in time and not into eternity every day.¹⁰⁵ “The almighty God was real to Black people. Those who could have a personal relationship with God could assure themselves of a friend who ‘sticketh closer than a brother.’”¹⁰⁶

“In Christ we are the children of God. The reality of this relationship would not be more certain if there could be added to it anything whatsoever coming from us. The divine reality alone is the fullness of all reality.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press Inc., 1995), 38.

¹⁰⁴ Benjamin E. Mays, *The Negro’s God* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 83, quoted in Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press Inc., 1995), 103.

¹⁰⁵ Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, 38.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰⁷ Karl Barth, *Prayer* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985), 24.

“Jesus Christ is the donor and the warrant of the divine Fatherhood and of our filiality (suitability). It is the reason for which this Fatherhood and this filiality are incomparably superior to any other, to any relationship suggested to us by the words “father,” “son,” and “children.” These human bonds are not the original, of which the other would be the image or symbol. The original, the true fatherhood, the true filiality are in these ties which God has created between us. Everything that exists among us is merely the image of this original filiality. When we call God our Father, we do not fall into symbolism; on the contrary, we are in the full reality of the words “father,” and “son.”¹⁰⁸

Pray then like this: Our Father, who art in heaven . . .¹⁰⁹ It is in this passage that Jesus gives us a model for how Christians are to pray. But the important thing, Ebeling states, is not the individual words. Jesus did not seek to teach us a prayer, but to teach us to pray—and that of course means at the same time to liberate us from anxious and superstitious use of formulas.

When we say, “Our Father,” what happens is no less than that the world receives a different face as we hold fast to the fact that in Jesus the face of the Father looks upon us. We naturally think that words are meaningful only as a means of communication between people, and that it is therefore really foolish and meaningless to speak to God in human words. But to think that way is completely to fail to realize what is actually at stake in our words, no less than our true being. When Christians understand prayer in this way and learn to pray in this way, then the problem as to whether or not prayer is heard no longer exists at all.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 24-25

¹⁰⁹ Matt. 6:9

¹¹⁰ Gerhard Ebeling, *The Lord's Prayer* (Paraclete Press, 2000), 1, 7, 916.

The name Father is the address of a child's love, dependency and trust. The child knows that the Father will hear and turn when called "Father." When a person genuinely says "Father," he or she is surrendering to God. The person surrendering is denying humanism, self-sufficiency, and all other gods, surrendering himself or herself to God the Father and acknowledging God to be Father.¹¹¹

Prayer and the Son

Jesus is seen in the New Testament as the key to that personal relationship with God that is central to prayer. Looking back on Jesus' death and resurrection, we understand what Jesus was saying when he taught his disciples, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Through Jesus, and because of his cross, we can "approach the throne of grace with confidence," sure that we will "receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

In her book, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus*, Grant quotes Harold Carter as saying, "In the experiences of Black people, Jesus was "all things."¹¹² Chief among these however, was the belief in Jesus as the divine co-sufferer, who empowers them in situations of oppression. For Christian Black women in the past, Jesus was their central frame of reference. They identified with Jesus because they believed that Jesus identified with them. As Harold Carter observed of Black prayers in general, there

¹¹¹ Alpha-Omega Ministries, Inc, *Practical Word Studies in the New Testament* (Chattanooga, Tennessee: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1998), 771.

¹¹² Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1976). Carter, in referring to traditional Black prayer in general, states that Jesus was revealed as one who "was all one needs!" p. 50, quoted in Jacquelyn Grant, (*White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus*, Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989), 212.

was no difference made between the persons of the trinity, Jesus, God, or the Holy Spirit. "All of these proper names for God were used interchangeably in prayer language. Thus, Jesus was the one who spoke the world into creation. He was the power behind the Church . . ." ¹¹³

However, a continuing intimate walk with Jesus is vital to prayer. Jesus, using the image of the vine and branches (John 15), told the apostles, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you" (15:7). That intimate relationship with Jesus, enhanced as his words re-shape our personalities to fit with his values and character, brings us into so rich a harmony with the Lord that what we wish is what God desires us to ask. Later that same night the apostles were told essentially the same thing, "My Father will give you whatever you ask in my name . . . Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (John 16:23-24). ¹¹⁴

It is "true prayer," according to Barth, that is offered in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ (see John 14:13; 16:23). Prayer "in the name of Jesus is prayer which we expect to be heard only . . . because God has loved and loves and will love the one who offers it as a lost sinner in Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ has come between this one and God . . ." ¹¹⁵ It is not the prayer of the "lost sinner" in Jesus Christ, as Barth describes believers, that is heard and answered, but the prayers of the "saints" in Christ, according to the apostle Paul (Romans 1:7, 8:27; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 1:1 1 Thessalonians 3:13). James 5:16 says, "it is the effective prayer of a 'righteous' man

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Word* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corp, 1985), 500.

¹¹⁵ Karl Barth, *Prayer* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985), 82.

that can accomplish much.”¹¹⁶ If we are indeed a “new creation” in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17) and have been made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21), then as we approach our Father in prayer, we should come understanding that we have a new identity and that our identity is no longer based on who we “were,” but on who we “are” now in Christ. Understanding this will also determine the efficacy of our prayers. James Cone also contends, “When St. Paul speaks of being ‘a new creature’ in Christ, the redeemed Black person takes that literally.”¹¹⁷

To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray as Christ prayed, and to pray to the Father as the Son has made him known to us, and for Jesus the true focus in prayer was the Father’s will. Here is the basic characteristic of Christian prayer: a new access to the Father which Christ secures for the Christian, and prayer in harmony with the Father’s will because it is offered in Christ’s name.¹¹⁸

Prayer and the Holy Spirit

Scriptural evidence leads to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit, even though a spirit being, is as real a person as the Father, or the Son, or as we are. Not only is the Spirit a person, but the Spirit is also a unique person, for the Holy Spirit is God. Proofs of personality are not necessarily proofs of Deity; but proofs of Deity are also proofs of the Spirit’s personality. If God is a person and if the Spirit is also God, then the Holy Spirit is a person also. The divine names of the Spirit reveal His Deity. Sixteen times the Spirit is

¹¹⁶ James 5:16

¹¹⁷ James H. Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 53.

¹¹⁸ *New Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.), 960.

related by name to the other two persons of the Trinity (Acts 16:7- “the Spirit of Jesus” in I Corinthians 6:11-“the Spirit of our God” in I John 4:2). Further, the promise of our Lord to send “another Helper” (John 14:16) uses the word for “another” that means another of the same kind. In other words, if Christ is God, then the Spirit, the other Helper of the same kind, is also God.¹¹⁹

Charles Ryrie states that the Spirit has done certain new and special things since “coming” on the Day of Pentecost. “At the heart of these distinctive ministries lies the ministry of dwelling in believers, for it is foundational to all the Spirit’s ministries to Christians in this age. A number of passages clearly teach that the Spirit is given to all believers rather than selectively to some (John 7:37-39; Acts 11:16-17; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:5). One would expect this to be, since a gift is not a reward and no merit is involved in receiving this gift.¹²⁰

The Holy Spirit lives within believers. The Spirit has a unique role in this intimate exchange known as prayer. “The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26), and “the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will” (v. 27). While the Spirit may assist us in prayer without our conscious awareness, our understanding clearly must be involved (1 Corinthians 14:13-15). Jesus told the apostles that the Spirit would take from what belongs to Jesus and make it known (John 16:15).¹²¹

“Notably in Paul, the Holy Spirit is the motivating power of prayer. The Spirit bears witness with the spirit of man (Romans 8:16, 27) and causes him to set his mind on

¹¹⁹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1999), 397.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 409.

¹²¹ Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, 500.

the things of the Spirit (vs. 5). Since the Spirit alone knows the mind of God (I Corinthians 2:10-12; cf. Romans 8:27), the Spirit can intercede for men, and actually teaches them to pray (Romans 8:26-27), interpreting to God their inarticulate sighs according to God's will. Only the Spirit can teach man to say 'Lord' (I Corinthians 12:3), and it is he who cries in us: 'Abba' (Galatians 4:6)."¹²²

Limited knowledge and wisdom need not hinder Christians from prayer, because the Holy Spirit will intercede. The words *stenagmois alaletois* (lit. "sighs unexpressed;" RSV "sighs too deep for words") are difficult to understand (see E. Kasemann, Comm. On Romans [Eng. Tr. 1980], pp. 239-242). They may refer to, (1) what is expressed by the Holy Spirit (RSV, AV, NIV) or (2) one's own sighs or groans, which the Spirit then interprets on one's behalf (NEB). In the latter case the construction of the phrase can be understood as an instrumental dative (i.e., "through . . .") or even as a dative of reference (i.e., with reference to . . .).¹²³

"Perhaps Paul's greatest contribution to our understanding of Christian prayer is in establishing its connection with the Holy Spirit. Prayer, according to Scripture, is in fact a gift of the Spirit given by God (I Corinthians 14:14-16). The believer prays "in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20). Hence prayer is cooperation between God and the believer in that it is presented to the Father, in the name of the Son, through the inspiration of the indwelling Holy Spirit."¹²⁴

In his book, *Talking to God*, Thomas Constable maintains that

the Holy Spirit helps us to recognize and to compensate for deficiencies in our praying. The Spirit also intercedes for us in a way that we could not whenever we need this ministry. The Spirit does this by communicating the deepest groanings of our hearts

¹²² *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1962), 864.

¹²³ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 936.

¹²⁴ *New Bible Dictionary*, 960.

that we cannot even express in words to God. The Holy Spirit turns these unutterable desires into intercession in a manner that God hears. When we cannot express our deepest desires and feelings, the Spirit communicates these and offers them to God for us (Romans 8:26-27; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:2-5). The Spirit of God is able to express to God unspoken words or words that cannot be expressed in human language during our prayers.”¹²⁵

Foster describes the activity of the Holy Spirit during prayer as “prayer of the heart.” The old writers spoke of three stages in prayer: prayer of the lips, prayer of the mind, and prayer of the heart. Whatever we may think of this categorization, we can all agree with their assessment that when we come to the “prayer of the heart,” we have entered a realm where the Holy Spirit is the initiator. It is the Holy Spirit who creates this prayer and it is the Holy Spirit who sustains it.¹²⁶

In his book, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, Carter states, “The person who prayed in the Black prayer tradition was always doing three things. First, one was literally talking with God. Such a person was convinced the Spirit was telling him or her what to say. Secondly, one was talking with oneself. A person’s own problems, frustrations, yearnings, and expectations came through in the moment of prayer. Thirdly, one was talking with those persons who joined with one in the act of worship. The act of prayer was always a supreme moment when the person’s life was literally shared in an act of divine communication.”¹²⁷

Prayer, therefore, was an event in the Black congregation. It was that moment when the Spirit of God possessed the person who prayed. Prayer in this tradition was more than a ritual or literary

¹²⁵ Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches About Prayer* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995), 127-28.

¹²⁶ Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco, California: Harper, 1992), 136-37.

¹²⁷ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 53.

composition. Prayer was a person talking to the Father in Jesus' name. The force of imagery took over, and Jesus, the anthropomorphic (having human characteristics) God-man, came riding on in the hearts of his people, building lives up where they were torn down, and fixing broken hearts. The Savior was always "a-listening to hear somebody pray." The one at prayer became robed with a spiritual dimension. It was no longer a person who spoke, but it was the Spirit of God speaking through that person.¹²⁸

Though we may not fully understand the ramifications of the Spirit's praying in the believer, the fact that the Spirit does is perfectly clear, "And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). The way the Spirit helps meet our needs is described in general by the word "help," which literally means "putting the Spirit's hand to the work in cooperation with us."¹²⁹ These groanings, the meaning of which cannot be grasped, find no adequate or formulated expression. One thing we do know—they are according to the will of God. In another passage we are told that the Spirit guides and directs our prayers (Ephesians 6:18). This is more the guidance of the believer's heart and mind as the Spirit prays, than the unutterable groanings of the Spirit.¹³⁰ Praise God for the Person and power of the Holy Spirit, who as a gift from almighty God is able to do for us (believers), in prayer, what we are unable to do for ourselves.

Previous sections have examined the theological basis for prayer and the Father, prayer and the Son, and prayer and the Holy Spirit. However, questions still remain for the House of Hope Church. What conditions are necessary for answered prayer? How

¹²⁸ Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, 53.

¹²⁹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1999), 441.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

can the House of Hope Church know that the prayers being offered on behalf of its community will be heard and answered? Attention will be given next to conditions necessary for answered prayer.

Prayer Conditions

In much popular literature on prayer, “conditions for answered prayer” are laid down. Often the treatment suggests that only if certain obstacles are overcome will prayer be answered. If we do not successfully negotiate the obstacle course, God will not hear us. Too often, the reader is given the impression that God stands watching like a tennis judge, ready to disqualify us if we are even slightly out of bounds. The relational nature of prayer is missed and prayer is recast as a spiritual exercise, with answers depending on our efforts rather than on God’s grace and good will.¹³¹

What are the supposed “conditions,” and how are we to understand them? The Old Testament tells us that disobedience (Deuteronomy 1:43-45), unconcern (Isaiah 58:7-9), and injustice (Isaiah 1:15-17; 59:1-2, 4, 9; Micah 3:1-4) prevent God from hearing and answering prayer. Those whose lives are marked by such traits clearly do not live in fellowship with God, for the people who are close to the Lord are obedient and loving and seek to do justice. It is in the context of a growing relationship with the Lord that prayer finds its place. Outside of such a relationship, prayer is a meaningless exercise.¹³²

The New Testament offers us encouragement that our requests (*aitema*) will surely be answered. This encouragement comes as a listing of indicators that reassure us that our relationship with God is vital and real. Those who seek, knock, and ask, receive what

¹³¹ Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, 500.

¹³² Ibid.

they request (Matthew 7:7-11). Jesus told the apostles that when two agreed regarding a matter, it would be done by God (Matthew 18:19). To pray “in Jesus’ name” means to identify with his character and purpose (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23). The truth that we have in God, which calms our doubts and uncertainties, also testifies to us that God’s answer will come. Only those who show contempt for God by questioning his ability or willingness to act in human affairs, and thus violate the relationship, will not be answered when they call (James 1:5). As we obey the Lord, we are assured that we live in a relationship with God in which our prayers are heard and answered (I John 3:22). As Scripture and the Holy Spirit testify to us that what we ask is in the framework of God’s will, we can have confidence that what we asked for will be granted (I John 5:14-15).¹³³

According to Constable, in his book *Talking to God*, one of the most obvious conditions for receiving answers to one’s prayers is that we call on God and ask for benefits. “This may seem almost too self-evident to mention, but the Bible contains many encouragements to ask God for things in prayer (Psalm 50:14-15; Matthew 7:12; Luke 11:5-13; Romans 10:13; Philippians 4:6-7; James 1:5). Yet we do not ask God for them (James 4:2). It is so important to God that we ask for things in prayer, and God commands us to do so (John 15:7). The first condition for receiving something from God in prayer is asking for it.”¹³⁴

Whenever we can facilitate the reception of a gift prayed for by doing something ourselves to aid its arrival, we should do so provided that this does not involve departing from God’s will (Nehemiah 4:9; James 5:14). Asking God for a healing, for example, and

¹³³ Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, 500.

¹³⁴ Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books 1995), 170-71.

then neglecting to take the medicine is a foolish procedure. God has always worked through means more often than working immediately. To abandon the means God normally uses may frustrate his granting an answer to prayer. Refusal to do all that we can to obtain our prayer request is not an evidence of great faith. Rather it proves that we either do not understand God's ways or are not serious about obtaining our request. Of course, God sometimes answers prayer without any human means.¹³⁵

Helplessness is an attitude toward oneself that causes a person to cry out to God to do something that one feels incapable of doing. This attitude is the product of a proper understanding of the nature of God and the nature of humanity. This understanding can come only as God illuminates our minds concerning this truth through the Holy Spirit. All people feel helpless occasionally, and this moves us to pray. However, as we become aware of our constant and desperate helplessness, we shall pray more and we shall pray more effectively. This attitude is an indispensable condition for effective praying (John 15:5).¹³⁶

Humility is another condition of answered prayer, and it, too, is the natural product of an awareness of one's helplessness. The person praying must come before God as a suppliant, not as a dictator. Two of the Greek words for prayer mean, "to beg." One word, *deomia*, is used by every New Testament writer except John and Jude. It expresses the need felt in prayer. The other word, *parakaleo*, means prayer only twice, but it means "to beg" or "to beseech" and is an admission of helplessness, lack of self-sufficiency, and

¹³⁵ Ibid., 171.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

utter impotency. These words reflect the humility with which we must offer prayers to avail with God.¹³⁷

Another characteristic of prayers that God answers in Scripture is fervency or earnestness. The person who feels his or her helplessness greatly cannot help praying fervently if he or she is serious about the request. In the Bible, there are many examples of fervent prayers that God answered. We do not greatly move God to answer a prayer when we offer it half-heartedly or absent-mindedly. Obviously such a prayer is fairly unimportant to the person praying.¹³⁸

In his book *Slave Religion*, Albert J. Raboteau recounts the story of an ex-slave named Candus Richardson from Franklin County, Mississippi. One day Mrs. Richardson's husband stole off to the woods to pray, "but he prayed so loud that anybody close around could hear," and so was discovered and punished. The fact, which Mrs. Richardson proudly stressed, was that "beating didn't stop my husband from praying. He just kept on praying and it was his prayers," she explained to interviewers, and "a whole lot of other slaves that cause you young folks to be free today." Beatings did not stop slaves from praying and these prayers were symbols of resistance, symbols whose power was not underestimated by the planters. Again this account reiterates what Constable has already stated: that God answers fervent and earnest prayers.¹³⁹

The helpless believer will also offer prayers shamelessly. Shameless praying means a person is not afraid to acknowledge great need and to call upon God boldly to meet it

¹³⁷ Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995), 172.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford Press, 1978), 307.

(Luke 11:5-13; Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-16). The person who does not feel his or her need greatly may feel embarrassed telling God that he or she has some seemingly trivial need and may not pray at all. The result will be that the prayer will be unanswered and the need will remain unsatisfied.¹⁴⁰

The proper attitude toward oneself in prayer then is helplessness. This attitude will result in certain qualities in prayer such as persistence, humility, fervency, and shamelessness.¹⁴¹

While a person's attitude toward himself or herself in prayer must be helplessness, the attitude toward God must be trust or faith. Helplessness alone is not prayer. It is only frustration.¹⁴² The faith necessary for God to answer prayer is not necessarily the confidence that God will grant the request unless the promise has been made. "It is rather the conviction that God can grant it if he chooses to do so (1 Samuel. 1:18; 1 Chronicles 5:20; 2 Chronicles 14:11; Matt. 21:20-22; Mark 9:14-27; 11:20-25; Hebrews 11:6; James 1:8; 5:14). We can never be sure that God will answer our petitions, unless the Lord has promised to do so, since this would require a complete understanding of the whole decree of God. However, we must believe or have faith that God can grant them. Indeed, if we do not, we probably will not pray at all.¹⁴³

If there are indeed certain conditions for answered prayer, and if the church can expect to see radical changes within its community as a result of intercessory prayer, then

¹⁴⁰ Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995), 173.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

our expectations must say something about the faith of the people praying. One of the most crucial components for effectual intercessory prayer is faith.

Faith has been defined as a spiritual attitude involving activity. The children of Israel stood condemned because they rebelled at God's command to take possession of the land given to them. Fundamental to this rebellion is the claim: "You did not trust God or obey God" (Deuteronomy 9:23). On the other hand, Abram stood approved when he acknowledged the promise of God and trusted God's power to perform what had been promised: "Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord credited it to Abram as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). The Lord indicated to Abram the plan for history, and Abram believed it to be something real and was filled with a firmness and security in the Lord. Abram's subsequent exercise of patience and obedient actions are clear indications of the meaning of faith.¹⁴⁴

In a discussion with skeptical disciples, Jesus asserts that power is available to all who have faith (Mark 11:23), and that prayer is one means for expressing this faith (Mark 11:24). This paradoxical power of faith is seen not only in its "mountain-mover" quality, which is a kind of participation in God's creative activity, but also in its comparison with a minute grain of mustard seed (Luke 17:6). To place one's trust in God is to open the door for radical change in the meaning of life itself.¹⁴⁵ As the House of Hope Church expresses its faith through intercessory prayer for the community, it too will begin to see radical changes.

¹⁴⁴ *Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 236-37.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The House of Hope Church must be a church that fully trusts and has confidence in knowing that if God asks the church to pray for leaders and those in authority and are faithful to believe God, the prayers to lead a tranquil and quiet life in the city of Columbus will be honored.

Samuel DeWitt Proctor describes the faith of Black people as “a fortress.” Proctor asserts that a persistent faith propels them—faith in God, faith in their own worth and dignity, and faith in the idea that America’s 250 million diverse people can cohere in a true community that gives space to ethnic preferences, but gives loyalty to the basic values of equality, compassion, freedom, and justice.¹⁴⁶

In addition to the attitude of faith, we must be obedient to God’s will to receive answers to our prayers (Numbers 21:7; Ps. 27:8; 1 John 3:22). This does not mean that we must be sinless. If that were the condition, no one could ever receive an answer from God. Being obedient means that we must be living in fellowship with God (Psalms. 66:18; Malachi 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:8; 2 Timothy 2:22). This involves confessing sins when we commit them and repenting from all kinds of evil practices. One common New Testament term for living in fellowship with God is “abiding in Christ” (John 15:7).¹⁴⁷

Along with these conditions there must be sincerity in prayer. When we pray, we must pray to and for God, not to make a good impression on other people or simply because it is time to pray (Matthew 6:6). God promises to be near those who call on the Lord from the heart and to fulfill the desire of those that fear God (Psalms 145:18-19).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1995), xx.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 173-74.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

In his book, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, Carter also has something to say concerning the issue of praying with sincerity. Carter states that, “Black people tend to believe that prayer has not been effective when one’s burdens are not lifted. In simple language, prayer must make the believer ‘feel better’! When this does not happen, it is felt that the prayer did not ‘get through.’ One of the main reasons prayer does not ‘get through’ is insincerity in the heart.”¹⁴⁹

The writer believes that the conditions/attitudes necessary for the prayer (the one praying) to be heard and answered are not limited to those mentioned above and that unless God reveals what conditions have caused our prayers to go unanswered, we will never know. However, in his book, *Talking to God*, Constable believes that there is only one condition that a prayer itself *must* fulfill to receive an answer from God. According to Constable, it *must* be in the name of Jesus Christ (John 14:12-17; 15:16; 16:23-24). The almost trite phrase *in Jesus’ name* needs clarification, however. “In Jesus’ name” is not the proper complimentary close to a prayer similar to “sincerely yours,” which we may carelessly add at the end of a letter. When we use the phrase “*in Jesus’ name*” thoughtlessly, it carries no special weight with God. Prayers truly prayed in Jesus’ name are ones that Jesus himself could pray. They reflect Jesus’ understanding of the Father, the Lord’s desire for God’s glory, and submission to God’s will. They are prayers prayed in view of who God is, as God has been revealed in and through Jesus Christ. They appeal to God because of Jesus Christ’s atoning work and through this mediation. In short, they are prayers that Jesus Christ could pray.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, 1995), 94.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Prayer prayed in Jesus' name asks only for things within the will of God. For us to ask those things that are God's will demands that we know the will of God in every situation about which we pray. Obviously this is impossible. Therefore, when the will of God is unknown, the way to pray in Jesus' name is to ask subject to God's will (Matthew 6:9-10; 17:19-20; Luke 22: 40-44). Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is the perfect model. Jesus prayed that, if possible, God would remove the cup from him. If this was not the God's will, Jesus requested the God's will rather than the removal of the cup (Luke 22:42). If we always sincerely included in our petitions the clause "nevertheless not my will, but yours be done," we would always receive the best answer to our prayer, but not necessarily what we requested.¹⁵¹

In his book, *Slave Religion*, Raboteau shares Maria's story of praying in God's will. Maria, a slave woman from Raleigh, North Carolina described her mistress's failure to persuade her to pray for the South:

On our plantation, when the war was going on, there was a great revival, and mistress called the colored people together and told them to pray—to pray mightily that the enemy maybe driven back. So we prayed and prayed all over the plantation. But 'peared like de more de darkies prayed, de more nearer de Yankees come. Then the missus said, 'stop all this praying for the enemies, I won't have it. I believe they are praying for the enemies to come.' So there was no more praying where mistress could hear it . . . One day my mistress came out to me. 'Maria, M'ria . . . what does you pray for?' I prays, missus, that de Lord's will may be done. 'But you mustn't pray that way. 'But missus, if it's de Lord's will to drive 'em back, den they will go back.'¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995), 175.

¹⁵² Hogg, pp. 12-13 quoted from Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 309.

Prayer in God's will means praying in harmony with the promises that God has given (Exodus 32:11-14; 2 Kings 19:15-19). When we pray for God to fulfill his promises, we can have confidence that we are praying in God's will and in Jesus' name.¹⁵³

"Prayers in the name of Jesus are also prayed for the glory of God. The purpose of prayer as well as the purpose of everything else in life is to glorify God (Colossians 3:17). Every one of God's promises to answer prayer is a conditional promise. The secret to receiving answers to prayer is asking in the proper way."¹⁵⁴

In his book, *Working with God through Intercessory Prayer*, D. Edmond Hiebert concludes that thanksgiving is a key component of effective prayer. Hiebert illustrates this point with Daniel 6:10 which says "Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house . . . praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously." Daniel did not forget to thank God for all the past mercies and benefits he had received, even though his dangerous circumstances at the time were very far from causing a feeling of thanksgiving. Daniel also gave fervent thanks for the answers to prayer received. When in answer to prayer the forgotten dream of Nebuchadnezzar was made known to Daniel, his first response was heartfelt thanksgiving to God (Daniel 2:19-23).¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995), 175.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁵⁵ D. Edmond Hiebert, *Working with God through Intercessory Prayer* (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1991), 105.

Conclusion

“The nature of prayer derives from the nature of God, who is an omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign, and loving heavenly Father [sic]. Prayer should be directed toward the enhancement of the name and reputation of God. When good is recognized as having resulted from prayer, God receives the glory, not man [sic]. When prayer that is made in the name of Christ is heard and answered, Christ is honored, as is the Father [sic].”¹⁵⁶

God’s Word tells us in Ephesians 3:1 that the ultimate purpose of the church is to glorify God both now and for all eternity. We glorify God through our obedience to God’s will and desires just as Jesus Christ demonstrated obedience to God even to His death of the cross. Because Christians have been admonished to pray for those in our cities who are in authority, then the House of Hope Church has the awesome responsibility of fulfilling the command to intercede on behalf of those given the task of shaping not only our community, but also to a great extent, our lives. If God says to pray, then obviously God wants to do something about the deteriorating effects of prayerlessness in the church. God desperately wants to do something about the persecution, oppression, brutality, racism, sexism, and every other “ism” within the community that trickles down in many instances from those who are in authority. God will hear and answer those who have a mind and heart to pray, not forsaking the conditions necessary for God to hear and answer prayer. According to Delores S. Williams in her book, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, in Jeremiah 29:4-7 God, having promised survival to the exiled Jews, sends these commands to the captives:

¹⁵⁶ Thomas L. Constable, *Talking to God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1995), 176.

Build houses and live in them: plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and “pray” to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.¹⁵⁷

Williams continues by stating, “Then there is God’s advice that Black Americans might not want to hear: ‘Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.’”¹⁵⁸

Prayer in the Bible includes many kinds of communication with God, articulate and inarticulate, corporate and private. The nature of prayer derives from the nature of God, who is omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign, and loving. When good is recognized as having resulted from prayer, God receives the glory, not man. When prayer that is made in the name of Christ is heard and answered, Christ is honored, as is God. Any genuine need for guidance, strength, healing, daily bread, growth in grace, or whatever, can be brought to God. Such petitions are answered not in a magical or mechanical way, but in response to the faith of a person whose life and motives honor God.¹⁵⁹

The Columbus House of Hope Church (CHHC) is a church whose leadership desires to honor God. CHHC is committed to being a church of faith and power expressed through a commitment to prayer. In his book, *Kingdom Keys: Mobilizing Your Church through Intercessory Prayer*, Dr. Jeremiah Tillman says, “the church’s greatest deficiency today is in power, not in programs, strategies, materials, or ideas. The power for ministry

¹⁵⁷ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 194.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 195.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 939.

can be released only through prayer. Many churches have high-speed ministries and qualified staff, but do not operate in the power of God! Consequently, it's literally impossible to have a ministry empowered by God without giving attention to prayer. God has chosen prayer as the key by which his church does its work. Through prayer we impact the world for God."¹⁶⁰

As this writer searches deeper into the church's call to pray on behalf of others and to intercede not only for our local government, but also for every institution that helps to shape the life of our community, there is a greater awareness of the magnitude of such a challenge for such a small congregation. The Columbus House of Hope Church is ready for the challenge and it will be fascinating to see what God is able to do through a small body of believers who are committed to impacting the world around them through the power of prayer. As pastor of Columbus House of Hope Church, it is through intercessory prayer that this writer longs to experience this impact in its fullness. Ephesians 3:20 states, "Now to Him [sic] who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us."¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Jeremiah Tillman, *Kingdom Keys: Mobilizing Your Church Through Intercessory Prayer* (Lansing, Illinois: Cross Power Publications, Temple of Mercy Ministries), 20, 21.

¹⁶¹ Eph. 3:20

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The focus group for this ministry project was “Urban Development and Intercultural Communications.” The group’s primary objective was to educate and equip church and community leaders in the areas of evaluating, designing, and implementing policies to solve pressing social, economic, political and cultural problems within the community.

This ministry project evolved out of the researcher’s concern for the welfare of new Christians and a growing awareness of the importance of having the church praying on their behalf. Because the Columbus House of Hope Church in Columbus, Georgia has witnessed the power and faithfulness of God to answer prayers that were offered on behalf of members, the researcher sensed a call from God for the church to activate God’s power through prayer on behalf of the community—meaning its lay citizens, institutions, and the public officials/leaders responsible for shaping the lives of the people within the community.

In light of the ever-present problems of racism, classism, sexism, the degradation of human dignity and social injustices across this nation and throughout the world, there was absolutely no ambivalence concerning the researcher’s summons by Almighty God to fulfill not only a personal obligation, but, as pastor, a mandate for the church to seek the welfare of the city and pray on its behalf. With the motto, “A place where people meet

and lives are changed,” how does God’s mandate to the church to pray on behalf of the community not resonate with the members of the Columbus House of Hope Church?

The hypothesis for this project was that, by increasing the level of knowledge and understanding of God’s mandate for the church to seek the welfare of the community and pray on its behalf, the level of commitment on the part of the church to engage in individual as well as corporate prayer will be heightened. Coupled with specific concerns/prayer requests from community leaders, lay citizens and church members, this allows the church to focus on praying for specific social, economic, cultural and political changes that are necessary for the welfare (peace and prosperity) of the community.

The researcher used the mixed methods approach to data collection in this study because she wanted to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.¹ Sequential and transformative procedures were used as strategies of inquiry. Sequential procedures often begin with a quantitative method in which theories or concepts are tested and followed by a qualitative approach involving a few cases or individuals who are studied for more detail.²

Community Survey/Questionnaire (Columbus, Georgia)

The researcher and her context associates developed a community survey of twenty-one questions that was utilized to randomly test 129 people throughout the community of Columbus, Georgia and the Franchise Missionary Baptist Church located in Phenix City, Alabama where professional associate Dr. Raymond Cochran is pastor. The

¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2003), 20.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

survey was used to test the researcher's theory that most people desire change in their community, however a substantial number of people lack true knowledge and understanding of God's mandate to the church to pray individually and collectively as the body of Christ for the welfare of its community and thereby spend very little or no time praying for the community.

The purpose of this qualitative method was for the researcher to be able to make claims about the group studied and their attitudes concerning intercessory prayer for their community. Participants were selected at random. There were a total of 129 questionnaires completed, out of which 114 were completed in the Columbus community. See Appendix A for a sample questionnaire. The context associates were responsible for administering the survey. The rapid turnaround in data collection was remarkable. The survey was completed within a one and one-half week period, between October 20, 2004 and October 31, 2004. The questionnaire consisted of two sections with a total of twenty questions. Section One contained ten questions seeking personal and family information, while Section Two contained ten questions that were general in nature and used to inform the researcher of a population's attitude towards praying for their community.

The questionnaires were divided into five categories. The five categories are found in Appendix B. The first category was those who, except for extreme emergencies, attended church all the time. This was the largest group. According to the survey, fifty-three out of 114 participants attended church. The second group was those who attended church most of the time. Twenty-eight out of 114 said they attend church most of the time. Those who attended church sometime were the third group. Thirty participants said they attend church sometime and only two said they never attend church. These three groups were further divided into two categories. The first group was those who have a

personal relationship with Jesus and feel connected in some way to the community and those who are Christians, but did not feel as if they were a part of the community. The 102 participants who said they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ also feel like they are a part of the community in which they live. Only nine said they were Christians, but did not feel connected to their community. The six questions employed by the researcher to prove her theory concerning those participants who desire change in their community, but lack knowledge and understanding concerning God's mandate to the church to pray on behalf of the community, were questions from Section Two of the survey. They are as follows: (1) I believe change will occur when Christians pray; (2) I have seen change occur because of prayer; (3) I would like for God to change my community; (4) I believe God has the power to change anything; and (5) I am involved in a prayer group. The participants were instructed to check Yes or No in response to each question.

The first and largest group examined was that of Christians who attended church and felt connected to the community. There were 102 participants in this group. Out of 102 participants, one hundred believe that change will occur when Christians pray because the same one hundred stated they have seen changes occur as a result of their prayers. One participant did not believe changes would occur when Christians pray. One participant did not respond to the question. In determining whether participants were conscious of the fact that there were changes within the community that needed to be made, even though the research did not ask for specific changes, ninety-five participants said they would like for God to change their community, while three did not answer the question. Out of 102 participants, all but one said they believe God has the power to change anything. One person did not respond to the question. Eighty-one out of 102

participants said they believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community. The researcher was appalled that eighteen people did not believe it was the responsibility of the church to pray for the community, although the majority would like for God to change their community. Interestingly, three participants believe it is the responsibility of the church to pray for the community and for the community to pray for the church. Out of the 102, forty-eight participants were involved in a prayer group, fifty-two were not involved and two did not respond to the question.

The second and smallest group analyzed was those Christians who attend church, but do not feel they are a part of the community. There were nine participants in this group. Of the nine, all believed changes would occur when Christians pray because all nine participants had seen changes occur because of prayer. Nine would also like for God to change their community. And they all believe God has the power to change anything. Again, the researcher finds it interesting that out of the nine participants in this group, only five said they believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community, while three did not believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community. One person did not respond to the questions. Out of the nine that did not feel connected to the community, three participants were involved with a prayer group and six were not involved. The results of the data indicate that the researcher's premise is accurate in that while the body of Christ (the Church) desires to see change in their community, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding that it is the responsibility of the church to pray for the community and for community change. Because of the lack of knowledge and understanding, there is little commitment on the part of most Christians to involve themselves with a prayer group, let alone a group that prays for their community.

**Pilot Survey/Questionnaire
(Franchise Missionary Baptist Church, Phenix City, Alabama)**

Out of 129 questionnaires completed, fifteen questionnaires were administered to members of the Franchise Missionary Baptist Church in Phenix City, Alabama. The purpose of the pilot survey was to see if the researcher's findings would be similar to the data collected from the survey administered in Columbus. The same questionnaire used for the Columbus, Georgia community was used for Franchise. The questions used to validate the researcher's claim concerning those participants from Columbus, Georgia community were the same as those used to validate the researcher's claim concerning those participants from Franchise. The questions used are found in Appendix C. The researcher was primarily concerned with the number of people who wanted to see change in their community and the ones who were actually spending time praying for their community. Data summary is found in Appendix D.

Of the fifteen participants attending church, thirteen said they attend all the time, two attend most of the time and zero attended some on the time. These two groups were further divided into those who are Christian and feel connected to the community and those who are Christian, but do not feel connected to the community. Out of fifteen participants, thirteen felt they were a part of the community, while two did not feel they were a part of the community and one person did not respond to the question. Out of the thirteen participants who attend church all the time, twelve believe changes will occur when Christians pray. Eleven people have seen changes occur because of prayer. Twelve participants would like for God to change their community. Eleven people believe God had the power to change anything, thirteen participants believe it is the church's

responsibility to pray for the community, while only seven of those thirteen are involved with a prayer group.

Out of the two participants who said they attend church most of the time, both participants believe changes will occur when Christians pray. Both have seen changes occur as a result of prayer. Both participants would like for God to change their community, believe God has the power to change anything and that it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community. Only one participant is involved with a prayer group. Out of the fifteen participants who have a personal relationship with Jesus and felt connected to the community, fourteen believe changes will occur when Christians pray. Fourteen have seen changes occur because of prayer. Fourteen participants would like for God to change their community. Fourteen people believe God has the power to change their community, while only nine people said they were involved with a prayer group. Of the one participant who had a personal relationship with Jesus and did not feel connected to the community, that one person believes changes will occur when Christians pray; had seen changes occur because of prayer; would like for God to change their community; believes God has the power to change anything; believes it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community, but is not involved with a prayer group. The researcher believes her claim has been validated. Christians desire to see change in their communities, but obviously lack the knowledge and understanding of the importance of the church engaging in intercessory prayer on behalf of the community. Out of thirteen participants who said they attend church all the time, only seven are involved with a prayer group. Of the two participants who attend church sometime, only one is involved with a prayer group. The researcher's findings from the data were what she expected. The study began with a quantitative method in which the researcher's theory was tested on a general population

and was followed by qualitative methods of research that involved focusing on a smaller group. These two methods were observation and person-to-person audio recorded interviews.

Observation

For approximately eight weeks the researcher observed the context associates in their natural setting, the Columbus House of Hope Church, 2703 Beacon Avenue, Columbus, Georgia. One of the key elements of collecting data is to observe participants' behavior by participating in their activities.³ However the qualitative observer/researcher may also engage in roles varying from a complete participant to a non-participant.⁴ The researcher chose to engage as a participant. Engaging as a participant involved the researcher in facilitating four weekly study sessions on the prayer tradition of black people and in the discussion following each session, preaching three sermons on the church's responsibility to pray for the welfare of its community and other details associated with the project while at the same time being conscious of context associates' behavior and activities.

A researcher's field-notes can be recorded in either an unstructured or semi-structured way.⁵ This means that the researcher may or may not use some prior questions that he or she wants to know.⁶ The researcher chose to record her field-notes in a semi-structured manner with only one prior question needing to be answered. The question to

³ Ibid., 21.

⁴ Ibid., 188.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid.

be answered was, “Will context associates better understand the importance of praying for the community as a result of the project?” According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, attitude is a matter of showing one’s feelings or thought. The researcher was able to capture the overall attitudes of the participants during the implementation of the project by observing and recording primarily their comments and questions regarding the study sessions which were held for four consecutive Wednesdays (October 6, 2004-October 27, 2004) and the Sunday services which were held for four consecutive Sundays (November 29, 2004-December 19, 2004) at the research site, which was the Columbus House of Hope Church sanctuary, located at 2721 Beacon Avenue, Columbus, Georgia. One reason for the four week gap between the last study session and the first Sunday service that focused on prayer for the community was because it was not until the researcher had conducted a couple of the study sessions that she realized, as stated earlier, that the sessions could be a vital part of the ministry project. At the onset of conducting the study sessions on the prayer tradition of black people, the researcher had not made a conscious decision to incorporate the study sessions as a part of the project. The four weeks between the last study session and the first Sunday service were used to meet with city officials/leaders in regard to their concerns and prayer requests on behalf of the community so that the context associates could begin praying for those requests. Finally, the time was used to prepare for the weekly Sunday sermons that would be preached during the prayer campaign and to have signs, banners, sweatshirts and other related details completed.

The purpose of the observation was to discover whether the context associates’ level of knowledge and understanding of the church’s responsibility to pray for the community and for community change increased, thereby influencing their commitment level to pray on behalf of the community. The researcher chose this data collection type

because it allowed for firsthand experience with the participation and the researcher was able to record information as it was revealed. As a result of the researcher utilizing Harold Carter's book, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*, as a primary source for the historical foundation aspect of her paper, the researcher was compelled to use the book as a major tool to inform the context associates of the strength, resilience and power of the black slaves in praying for change, thus inspiring the context associates to engage in praying individually and corporately for their community and for community change. The researcher also incorporated four Sunday services that focused on praying for the community and for community change as a means to enhance the level of knowledge and understanding of the church' command to pray on behalf of the community, thus improving the context associates' commitment level to engage in prayer for the community change. With the context and professional associates' input, November 28, 2004 to December 19, 2004 was set aside for The Columbus House of Hope prayer campaign.

The purpose of the campaign was not only to inform and ignite enthusiasm to pray for the community, but the researcher was convinced that the prayer campaign would also be a means of involving the congregation as a whole in four weekly services that would allow them hands-on opportunities to participate in something the researcher believed would have a lasting impact. The hands-on opportunities involved passing out prayer campaign buttons and sweat-shirts (determining sweat-shirt size for those present for Bible class during second Sunday of the campaign), assisting with voter registration and the voting process, being a spokesperson for prayer or one of prayer's opponents, making campaign signs, constructing the voting booth, singing songs related to prayer, and praying for the community and for community change.

The prayer campaign slogan was, “Seek the Welfare of the City and Pray on Its Behalf.” The slogan was taken from Jeremiah 29:7 which reads, “And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.”⁷ This Scripture was chosen because it resonates with the researcher. The researcher realized that she was not in Columbus, Georgia for any reason other than the fact that God had sent her and her husband there over twenty-three years ago to fulfill the Lord’s mandate to seek the welfare of Columbus and to pray on its behalf. During the month of November the researcher met with top city officials as a way of engaging the community through this ministry project. The purpose of the meetings was to have the community leaders to articulate their concerns for the community and the changes they would like to see as a result of the Columbus House of Hope Praying on their behalf. A summary of those requests is found in Appendix E. Upon completion of the researcher’s field experience, the researcher was convicted for not having any lay citizens articulate their concerns for the community and the changes they would like to see.

In early March, the researcher decided to visit three females who lived in the same community as the researcher. The researcher selected three females from the community because all the community officials/leaders were male and the researcher desired to have a female voice from the community. Having engaged people in the community and having obtained specific concerns and requests leaves the Columbus House of Hope Church with absolutely no excuse when it comes to praying for the community and for community change.

⁷ Jer. 29:7

Throughout the prayer campaign the researcher observed the context associates' enthusiasm and eagerness to plan and participate, and was overwhelmed. Their planning and the execution of those plans were incredible. The participants' comments, questions, and prayers during each Sunday service and Wednesday night praise and prayer hour once again proved the researcher's theory that, with increased knowledge and understanding of God's mandate to seek the welfare of the city and pray on its behalf, the level of commitment to pray for change will increase on the part of the participants. A data summary is found in Appendix F. The predominant theme of the observation data was two-fold: the participants' desire for others to know the importance of praying for their community and their willingness to share with others what they had learned concerning the church's responsibility to pray for the community.

It is not until an individual has been impacted by a life experience that they desire to relate that experience to others. *Webster's Dictionary* defines the word impact as "the power to move feelings, influence, thinking, etc."⁸ The researcher believes that the participants were impacted by the prayer campaign and therefore have a willingness to share with others what they have learned concerning their responsibility to prayer for the community. However, during the prayer campaign, it was also observed that at least one of the participants gave little or no verbal expression of the impact of the sessions or the Sunday services on them personally, although that participant was a leader in praying for many of the prayer requests made by the community leaders during the weekly praise and prayer hour. Hence, this validated the researcher's claim that when participants' knowledge and understanding of the church's call to pray for the welfare of the

⁸ *Webster New World Dictionary* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1995), 295.

community is increased, the participants' willingness and commitment to pray will also increase. However, limitations of observation were also discovered. Serving as participant and observer, the researcher's observational skills were hindered.

Person-To-Person Final Interviews

In determining whether the context associates had gained new knowledge and understanding of the church's responsibility to pray on behalf of the community and for community change; and whether or not the participants' level of commitment to intercede on behalf of the church was enhanced as a result of the project, five person-to-person interviews were conducted (Appendix G). Individual interviews were audio recorded. The purpose for the face-to-face interviews was to elicit views and opinions from the participants. This data collection type allowed control over the line of questioning. Each participant was asked to respond to five open-ended questions (Appendix H). The questions were: (1) As a result of the "Prayer Campaign," what new knowledge or insight have you gained concerning the church's responsibility to pray for the community and for community change? (2) What would you say were the key components of the "Prayer Campaign?" (3) How has your commitment level to pray for your community been affected by what you have learned? (4) What are some of the community changes you feel your church, the Columbus House of Hope Church, should be praying for as a result of the "Prayer Campaign?" and (5) When do you feel is the best time for our church to come together and pray for the community and for community change?

Of the five questions used for the final interviews, only the responses from two of the questions were necessary to determine the effectiveness of the ministry model employed. In response to whether or not participants had gained any new knowledge or

insight, all of the participants acknowledged that they had learned something concerning the church's responsibility to pray for the community. Even the participant who said he had always known that it was the church's responsibility to pray for the community also acknowledged that he had not taken this knowledge to heart and that he had "gained more understanding of God's word concerning praying for our community where God has placed us and that Jeremiah 29:7 really drove the point home." Concerning whether or not the participants' level of commitment had been enhanced as a result of the prayer campaign, all participants stated that they now spend at least some time during the week praying for their community. Two out of five participants said they try to remember to pray every day for the community.

Four strategies were used to check the findings' accuracy. They were (1) triangulation: Data was gathered from more than one source to use as evidence to support the hypothesis. The three sources used were survey, observation and final interviews, (2) use of rich, thick description to convey the findings to the reader who is transported to the setting of the project and is able to share the experiences through the detailed discussion of what took place in the field. This is most apparent in the detailed description of the four Sunday services during the prayer campaign, (3) negative or discrepant information: This was information that ran counter to the theme of the project. The most obvious was that out of 114 people surveyed at the beginning of the project, 111 said they had a personal relationship with Jesus, yet only 50 people said they were involved with a prayer group, and finally (4) peer debriefing which also enhanced the accuracy of the account. A total of three peers participated in this process during a quarterly peer session. Questions were asked and input was given about the qualitative study so that the account would resonate with the researcher alone.

It is this researcher's impression that the data collected and analyzed speaks to a spiritual hunger and thirst of believers to know the truth of God's Word, and to be able to apply that new knowledge to everyday life. When that truth is presented in a clear and understandable manner, there will be a level of enthusiasm, excitement and commitment to obey God's Word both individually and collectively. The data collected from the final interviews and observations clearly validates the claim that, with increased knowledge and understanding of the church's responsibility to pray for the community, there will be an increased level of commitment on the part of the church to pray on behalf of the community.

A timeline of dates and a detailed description of tasks that were necessary to complete the project has been provided in Appendix A.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The peace, prosperity, and wholeness of a community is contingent upon God's people interceding on its behalf. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain the core problems of a community. However, this researcher believes that, through engaging in dialogue with those who make up a community, such as those in authority as well as lay citizens, and determining some of the specific concerns of both groups, the church will be better equipped to pray for the welfare of its community.

With an increased knowledge and understanding of God's mandate for the church to intercede on behalf of its community, the researcher believes the level of commitment on the part of the church in fulfilling its obligation will be enhanced individually and collectively. Jeremiah 29:7 is God's mandate to the church and is stated as, "And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare."¹ In order to test the effectiveness of this ministry model the researcher employed the use of quantitative and qualitative research. The methods used to collect the necessary data were survey/questionnaires, observations and person-to-person- taped recorded interviews. A detailed timeline of field experience can be found in Appendix A.

¹ Jer. 29:7

Context and Professional Associate Involvement

The context associates were selected, given an individual letter (Appendix A) explaining the researcher's ministry project and asked to affirm their willingness to serve as co-researchers by signing an agreement form (Appendix A). The associates gave full participation in completing their individual questionnaires and in assisting with the completion of over one hundred more. These conscientious and enthusiastic associates were actively involved with the prayer campaign and the final person-to-person interviews. Ms. Johnnie R. Tillman remade the theme song for the prayer campaign. Ms. Joe Simmons and Ms. Cynthia Myricks were campaign coordinators. Ms. Phyllis Bennett and Mr. Willie Rozier were spokespersons for prayer during the Sunday services. Mrs. Rebecca and Mr. Plummer Sanderlin built the voting booth for the election.

The researcher contacted each professional associate by phone and asked for his or her willingness to assist in the completion of her ministry project. Each person was willing to serve and to help assure the researcher's success. The professional associates were sent letters expressing the researcher's gratitude (Appendix A). As a professional associate, Dr. Brel Clark preached the second sermon during the prayer campaign, arranged the music for each Sunday service and spoke on behalf of "prayer's" opponents, "too busy" and too tired" in an effort to assist the Columbus House of Hope church in understanding that being too busy and too tired are often excuses that prevent many local churches from coming together as the body of Christ and praying on behalf of the community and for community change. Dr. Raymond Cochran, pastor of the Franchise Missionary Baptist church, Phenix City, Alabama allowed the researcher to pilot the questionnaires at his church.

Community Survey/Questionnaires

The first step of this project was to meet with the researcher's contextual associates in order to solicit their input for questions to be used on the questionnaires. This researcher was pleased that her associates assisted in developing questions that were of great value in generating the data. The questionnaires consisted of two sections with a total of twenty questions. Part One contained ten questions seeking personal and family information. Part Two contained ten questions that were general in nature (Appendix B). The contextual associates eagerly distributed over one hundred questionnaires throughout the church and community. Some questionnaires were filled out by family members, while others were distributed to and completed by persons at randomly selected locations including the work place, doctors' offices, gas stations and neighborhoods.

The distribution and collection of questionnaires/surveys was completed within a one and one-half week period. The questionnaires were given to the context associates on Wednesday October 20, 2004 and were asked to be returned to the researcher no later than Sunday, October 31, 2004. The researcher believed that by requesting that the questionnaires be returned expeditiously, the associates would understand the importance of the details of the project and that any delay in returning the questionnaires could have a negative impact on the process. The questionnaire results are found in Appendix B.

The 114 completed questionnaires were separated into five categories. A condensed data summary is found in Appendix B. The first category was those who, except for extreme emergencies, attended church all the time. Surprisingly, the largest group was those who attend church all the time with fifty-three participants. The researcher believes the high number is because the study was done in what is considered

the “Bible belt.” The Bible belt is generally considered to be the most southern part of the nation where there is a dense population of evangelical Christians. The second category was those who attended church most of the time. Twenty-eight participants said they attend church most of the time. The third group was made up of thirty participants who said they attend church sometime and only two said they never attend church. Out of those participants who attend church at least some of the time, they were further divided into two categories making up the fourth and fifth groups of participants. There were 102 participants in group four who said they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and feel they were a part of the community. The fifth group consisted of nine participants who said they were Christians, but did not feel they were a part of the community.

The researcher employed six questions from Section Two of the questionnaire to test her hypothesis, which is that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of many Christians that it is the responsibility of the church to intercede on behalf of the community. Therefore, with increased knowledge and understanding, there will be an increased level of commitment to fulfill God’s mandate to the church to pray for the community into which God has sent each individual believer.

The five categories listed above were divided into two groups. The first and largest group examined was that of Christians (have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ) who attended church and felt connected to the community. There were 102 participants in this group. Out of 102 participants, one hundred believed that change will occur when Christians pray because he or she has seen changes occur as a result of their prayers. One participant did not believe changes would occur when Christians pray because they have not seen changes occur as a result of their prayers. One participant did not answer the question. In determining whether participants were

conscious of the fact that there were changes within the community that needed to be made even though this researcher did not ask for specific changes, ninety-five participants said they would like for God to change their community. Four participants would not like God to change their community, while three did not answer the question. Out of 102 participants, all but one said they believe God has the power to change anything. One participant did not answer the question. Eighty-one out of 102 participants said they believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community. Eighteen believe it is not the responsibility of the church to pray for the community although the majority would like for God to change their community. Three participants believed it is the responsibility of the church to pray for the community and for the community to pray for the church. Out of the 102, forty-eight participants said they were involved with a prayer group, fifty-two said they were not involved with a prayer group and two did not respond to the question.

The second and smallest group analyzed was those Christians who attended church, but did not feel connected to the community. There were nine participants in this group. Of the nine, all believe changes will occur when Christians pray because all have seen changes occur because of prayer. Nine would also like for God to change their community because they all believe God has the power to change anything. Again, this researcher finds it interesting that out of the nine participants in this group, only five said it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community, while three do not believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community. One person did not respond to the question. Out of the nine who did not feel connected to the community, three were involved with a prayer group and six were not involved.

Pilot Survey/Questionnaires

The researcher was privy to piloting the questionnaires at the Franchise Missionary Baptist Church, Phenix City, Alabama where professional associate Rev. Dr. Raymond Cochran is pastor. The questionnaires used at Franchise in Phenix City were the same as those used in Columbus by the context associates. At his discretion, Dr. Cochran selected the individual responsible for making certain that fifteen questionnaires were filled out and returned to him in a timely manner. A summary of the data is found in Appendix B.

Prayer Campaign

In considering what would be the most effective means of providing critical information to the church body concerning its mandate to pray on behalf of the community while at the same time igniting enthusiasm that would in some way raise the personal and corporate level of commitment to pray for the community and for community change, this researcher chose a prayer campaign. The genesis of the campaign actually began without the researcher being totally aware that the campaign was already under way. What is meant by this is that, after employing Harold Carter's book, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People*² as a primary source for the historical foundation of this project, the researcher was compelled to teach and discuss short excerpts from the book to the Wednesday night praise and prayer group, which consisted primarily of context associates. A few weeks into the study, it was realized that God was truly at work in this project even when she was unaware and that she had engaged a critical component of the project before she came to realize that the study was an incredible beginning of a church-wide

² Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995).

prayer campaign. The researcher met with the context associates to discuss the direction the Lord was taking the project and everyone was excited about the idea of a prayer campaign. The campaign included four Sunday services of sermons with the biblical basis for praying for the community and for community change. There were discussions about special music, an election, spokespersons, banners, buttons, posters, sweatshirts, balloons and interviews with community officials/leaders and lay citizens.

Study Sessions on the Prayer Tradition of Black People

As an introduction to the prayer campaign, this researcher facilitated four Wednesday night Study Sessions from October 6 through October 27, 2004 on the prayer tradition of black people taken from Harold Carter's book entitled *Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Appendix C). In his book, Carter describes how the African heritage and biblical influences have been combined in the prayer life of black people and shows how personal religion and vital social reform come together. Each session was held at the Columbus House of Hope Church in Columbus, Georgia at 2703 Beacon Avenue, 6:30 in the evening. The study sessions were in conjunction with the weekly Praise and Prayer Hour. Outlines of the sessions are in Appendix C. The sessions averaged ten adults in attendance with both females and males. The purpose of the study sessions was to inspire as well as inform the group of the tenacity and resilience of black slaves to persevere in prayer although they were forbidden in many instances by their slave masters to pray and of the impact of their prayers to bring about change in the life of a people in bondage to slavery and in a nation.

The first session highlighted African influence during slavery and individual initiative in finding God by relating to the Lord in prayer. There was a discussion on one

method the slaves used in order to pray without getting caught. It was the use of the pot. The pot was used as a way of catching the sound of the slaves' prayers in order to prevent the slave master from hearing the slaves during worship.³ The use of the pot during slavery resonates with this researcher in that for the researcher, the pot is symbolic of the slaves' determination to communicate with Almighty God concerning their plight of dehumanization regardless to the danger involved. This pot speaks clearly to the black church and to what should be our determination to seek Almighty God for the necessary changes within our communities no matter what. It was observed during this session that there was an atmosphere of excitement as well as verbal expressions of enthusiasm concerning the knowledge that was gained from the study session. One participant commented, "The whole church needs to hear this."

The second study session highlighted slaves' liberation through prayer. The group learned about Henry "Box" Brown, a slave from Richmond, Virginia and how his mother instilled in him the power of prayer, which eventually led to his freedom.⁴

The third study session focused on Booker T. Washington whose daughter observed the powerful force of prayer in her father's life and attributed his major accomplishments to his commitment to prayer. Included in this discussion was Harriett Tubman who was convinced her leadership was given to her through prayer to God and Sojourner Truth who cried out to God to give her a name with a handle to it.⁵ This researcher observed the increased level of enthusiasm among the members. There were

³ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 26.

⁴ Ibid., 100.

⁵ Ibid., 100-02.

various comments made following the session that were all positive and encouraging. One participant stated she had been sharing the discussion with her co-workers during her lunch hour at work.

Session four focused on George Washington Carver who believed that God worked miracles through prayer and Nannie Burroughs who stood in a cornfield before the founding of a school for girls and declared by faith a fervent prayer that a school would be erected to carry on the work of Christ in training Christian women.⁶

This researcher observed the final week of the study sessions that there were various comments about the study sessions and that there appeared to be an increased level of excitement each week. One member stated that she really enjoyed the sessions and had learned so much.

Sunday Services That Focused on Praying For the Community and For Community Change

The overall goal of the prayer campaign was to involve the members in worship services that focused on the church's responsibility to pray for the community and to ignite enthusiasm and a commitment to engage in private and corporate prayer that focused on the community and community change. There were four Sunday services, November 28, 2004 to December 19, 2004. The campaign slogan was "*Seek The Welfare of The City and Pray on Its Behalf*," taken from Jeremiah 29:7. A large banner with the slogan draped the wall of the pulpit to be seen as congregants entered the sanctuary (Appendix D). The context associates brainstormed and identified the most common opponents of prayer. They were "too busy" and "too tired." Thus "prayer" would engage

⁶ Ibid., 104.

in a four-week campaign in the fight against persons feeling “too busy” and “too tired.” The weekly services included songs related to prayer. The campaign’s theme song was a re-make by Ms. Johnnie R. Tillman. The song was entitled “*Let Us Pray for Our City*” which is sung to the tune “*Let Us Break Bread Together*” (Appendix G).

The first Sunday of the campaign everyone received a campaign button (Appendix D) as they entered for worship. The buttons, like the banner, carried the campaign slogan. Everyone was encouraged to wear their buttons each Sunday for the duration of the campaign. Each service included a person from the Wednesday night prayer group who spoke on behalf of prayer with the understanding that there are two common opponents of prayer. The congregation was informed that the two opponents of prayer were “too busy” or “too tired” and were encouraged not to allow these opponents to triumph over “prayer.” The sermon for the first week, which was delivered by the researcher was titled, “Your Call to Pray for Your Community.” The sermon text was taken from I Timothy 2:1-6 (Appendix E).

The second Sunday of the campaign was notably an exciting day. Brother Willie Rozier came as a supporter and spokesperson for “prayer” to encourage the church body to look to “prayer” as God’s answer to all the community’s needs and problems. Brother Willie emphasized that he knew prayer was the answer to whatever the problem was in the community and that he was convinced because of his personal experience with prayer. The second sermon for the prayer campaign was preached by Pastor Brel Clark of Columbus House of Hope Church. The sermon title was “Prayer, Getting to Know the Lord.” The sermon text came from Matthew 26:41 (Appendix E). The researcher announced at the end of service that the next Sunday morning, beginning at ten o’clock, voter registration would begin. Everyone was advised to register in advance of Election

Day, which was scheduled for Sunday December 19, 2004. Each person would have an opportunity to vote for the candidate of their choice, “prayer,” too busy” or “too tired.”

The third Sunday morning of the campaign was set aside for members to register to vote before attending Bible class. A registration table was set up at the entrance of the sanctuary so that, as people entered, a worker could assist in registering those from pre-schoolers to senior adults. Each person registering received a campaign sweatshirt purchased by the Columbus House of Hope Church to be worn on Election Day, the last Sunday of the campaign. The sweatshirts (Appendix E) like the banner and campaign buttons also carried the campaign slogan, *“Seek The Welfare of The City and Pray On Its Behalf.”* As a spokesperson for “prayer” at the beginning of worship service, Ms Phyllis Bernard incited the congregation to pray for the community with her acronym for “prayer.” Using six of the children from Sunday morning Bible Hour, Ms. Phyllis had each child to hold a 12x12 card of each letter in the word prayer. The letter P was for peace in the city of Columbus, Georgia. The letter R was for believers to repent by changing their thinking about how they see their community. The letter A was for accept. Believers are to accept the good news of what God wants for the city. The letter Y was for years. The church is to continue to pray unceasingly for years to come. The letter E was for eternal. Praying for our community will have eternal value. The letter R was for righteous. It is the prayers of the righteous that God promises to honor. The songs during worship related in some way prayer. The sermon title was “Prayer, The Power to Change Your Community, Part I” (Appendix E).

The Fourth Sunday of the prayer campaign began with excitement and anticipation of what the outcome of the voting would be that day. Members and guests who were present the previous Sunday came dressed in their sweat-shirts and campaign buttons that

read, *“Seek The Welfare of the City and Pray On Its Behalf.”* As individuals entered the building they were given an election ballot and were lead to a draped poll booth to vote their conviction; either for “prayer,” “too busy,” or “too tired.” Pastor Brel volunteered to speak one final time on behalf of “too busy” and “too tired” in hopes that the congregation would realize that believers cannot allow excuses such as being too busy or too tired to supercede God’s mandate to come together as the church and pray for its community. As the ballots were being cast and counted, the fourth sermon was being preached by the researcher entitled “Prayer, The Power to Change Your Community, Part II” (Appendix E). Because of time restraints, the researcher was pressed to complete the sermon series before the Christmas holidays and decided to postpone sermon five, entitled “Prayer, Motivated by Love for Your Community”(Appendix E) until a later date.

At the end of worship service, the results of the voting were announced by Pastor Brel. Prayer won the election by an overwhelming majority. Forty-five votes were cast for Prayer, two votes for “Too Tired” and one vote for “Too Busy.” There was an indescribable atmosphere of jubilation as members and guests stood, applauded and celebrated the victory of “prayer.” There was upbeat worship music, balloons, and cheers of excitement. It was truly an unforgettable moment.

Prayer Requests From City Officials/Leaders

In an effort to bring cohesiveness between this ministry project and the community and to provide an opportunity for context associates to actively engage in praying for specific needs and changes as articulated by city officials and leaders, this researcher scheduled a meeting to interview officials/leaders. These officials were given the opportunity to articulate specific changes they would like to see take place within the

community and the changes they would like for the Columbus House of Hope Church to commit to prayer. The researcher designed a prayer request form to be placed on the back of the church's sanctuary seats for public use and as post-it pads for individual private use (Appendix F). On Monday, November 15, 2004, this researcher met with the Mayor of Columbus, Georgia. The mayor was asked to share what he believed to be the primary changes that needed to take place in the community for which Columbus House of Hope Church could be praying. There were four prayer requests: (1) Unity for the city; (2) Love for each other; (3) A greater understanding of each other's religion and (4) Earnest decision making on the part of government.

Much to this researcher's amazement, her conversation with the mayor was a surprise. She did not know the mayor's religious orientation, but he indicated that he was a religious man and believed in God. The most that could be said by the researcher at this point was, "Our church (Columbus House of Hope) will be happy to know that the mayor is a religious man." The mayor responded by saying, "Of course I'm a religious man. I just don't wear my religion on my sleeve." That comment led the researcher to wonder how many city officials/leaders might be in our community who may not necessarily be professing Christians, but are people who have the capacity to do what is right if held accountable.

Later that same day, Monday, November 15, 2004 this researcher met with the Muscogee County Sheriff of Columbus, Georgia. The sheriff was informed of the researcher's ministry project and of its potential impact on the city. The researcher was given three primary concerns for the city and was asked to pray for the: (1) Sheriff to make sound decisions; (2) City to have an unbiased media and (3) Unity of the people. Again, this researcher was surprised, first that she would be allowed time with the sheriff

without an appointment. The decision to speak with the sheriff was made after the researcher's scheduled appointment with the mayor. Second, it was as though the conversation with the sheriff was scripted in that it was almost identical to the conversation with the mayor. The common thread that ran through each conversation was unity and earnest/sound decision-making. This tells the researcher one of two things: (1) these are well-calculated responses or (2) our public officials sincerely want to do what is right for the people of the community. This researcher would rather believe the latter.

On Wednesday, November 17, 2004, this researcher met briefly with the superintendent of the Muscogee County School Board, Columbus, Georgia. The superintendent shared his primary concerns for the students of Muscogee County School District and the city as a whole and asked if the Columbus House of Hope Church would be raying for: (1) A safe environment for students; (2) Support of parents who are actively involved in their child's well-being; (3) Parents and teachers to become role models through their actions; and (4) The community has empathy and understanding for all people.

On Wednesday, January 12, 2005, the researcher met with the President of the Muscogee County Clergy Association of Columbus, Georgia. Unlike the three previous meetings, this meeting was longer and a bit intense, meaning that the conversation touched on some hard issues and concerns of the religious community. There were a plethora of concerns/prayer requests: (1) Justice for all people (2) Violence; (3) Crime; (4) Selflessness; (5) Too many personal agendas; (6) Focusing on real issues; (7) Looking at self and one's motive; (8) Racial tensions; (9) Check Cashing and Pawn Shops; and (10) The Kenneth Walker incident. This incident involved four black males being pulled over on the interstate by Muscogee County deputies in Columbus, Georgia on December 10,

2003 on suspicion of drugs; resulting in thirty-nine-year-old Walker being shot in the head by one of the deputies. Although the deputy was acquitted by a grand jury, the general consensus of both black and white citizens is that justice has not been served in this particular case (Appendix F).

Prayer Requests From Lay Citizens

The researcher was first inclined to interview only those individuals who were city officials/leaders, but with the progression of this project came a conviction that this project would be more credible if it included representation from those Jesus hold near and dear to His heart—the least in our community.

So, on Tuesday, March 1, 2005, the researcher met with Ms. Betty Holt, a retired textile worker. Ms. Holt's concerns and prayer requests for change included: (1) Better housing in the community in which she lives, (2) Shopping centers in neighborhoods, (3) Jobs for people to work and make good salaries. Ms. Holt stated, "We might not have made enough back then, but we could afford to pay for somewhere to live," and (4) Medication for seniors. "We can't afford medication."

Thursday, March 3, 2005 found the researcher meeting with twenty-three-year-old Tamala Johnson, who was new to the city and looking for a job. When asked what changes our church could be praying about, Ms. Johnson's response was immediate and forthcoming. "Giving," she said without hesitation. "A lot of people can't help themselves and instead of helping, most people turn up their noses and go the other way. A community that prays together stays together. One person can't do it alone. It has to be a group."

Thursday, March 3, 2005 marked the date of the most interesting of all interviews. Mrs. Sanders, a senior adult homemaker and her husband were informed about the ministry project and the purpose of the visit. When asked about the changes Mrs. Sanders would like to see in the community and the changes our church could be praying for, she hesitated a moment and then replied, "There's a lot, but it ain't for me to say." There was silence for about twenty seconds. The researcher then asked, why not? There was only silence and squirming. Mrs. Sander's husband finally replied, "Give her a hint." The researcher tried to help by stating some of the issues other citizens were concerned about. Mrs. Sander's husband commented that "the races get along fine and there's harmony in the community and there is a good mix of blacks and whites." But the researcher turned to Mrs. Sanders to hear her response to the question. She stated once again that she could think of a lot of things, but it wasn't for her to say. The researcher asked, "Why not?" "Is it classified information?" Her husband replied, "The drug situation is one thing." Both Mr. and Mrs. Sanders began telling the researcher of the drug problem in the community. Mrs. Sanders insisted that the researcher only wanted the information to implicate her in a possible drug ring. However, Mrs. Sanders was informed that the researcher and the researcher's husband have both run drug dealers and users off the neighborhood street corners and we were still here. The researcher reassured Mrs. Sanders that the information taken would in no way jeopardize her or her family's life.

Observation

Throughout the implementation of the project, the context associates were observed by the researcher. The researcher recorded in a semi-structured way the attitudes of the context associates. Because attitude is the manner showing one's feelings

or thoughts, the researcher was able to capture the overall attitude of the associates during the implementation of this project by observing and recording primarily their comments and questions regarding the study sessions and the Sunday services at the research site, which was 2721 Beacon Avenue, Columbus, Georgia.

The purpose of the observations (Appendix G) was to show that, as the context associates' level of knowledge and understanding of the church's responsibility to pray for the community and for community change increased, their level of commitment to pray would also increase. Observation One began Wednesday, September 22, 2004 after the researcher informed the group of her ministry project, *Developing an Intercessory Prayer Ministry That Focuses on Praying For The Community and Community Change*. The context associates were asked if they would consider serving as co-researchers for the completion of the researcher's Doctor of Ministry degree. Seven people enthusiastically agreed to serve as context associates/co-researchers. One had already agreed to serve as a professional associate. In fact, one context associate stated with surprise, "You mean we get to be researchers too?" This comment demonstrated to the researcher that the group was off to an excellent start.

Observation Two – October 6, 2004, the researcher observed the group after the first study session on the prayer tradition of black people. Several members openly acknowledged their lack of knowledge concerning the prayer life of black slaves and expressed their gratitude for having learned and understood what one member referred to as something that was "so important."

Observation Three – October 13, 2004, the group was observed before the Wednesday study session. Positive and encouraging comments were made about the first study session. The researcher could feel an air of anticipation as each member waited

eagerly for the session to begin. Following the session, the researcher observed that the group, without hesitation, began discussing new information they had learned from the session that night and a few members began relating what they had learned about the slaves' prayer life to what the church should be about today. One person commented, "If we want to see change we are going to have to pray like our ancestors."

Observation Four – October 27, 2004, again various comments about the sessions were observed before and after the study sessions. One could not have imagined that the study sessions would generate as much excitement. One member stated that she was sharing what she was learning each week with co-workers during her lunch hour. Other members stated how much they had been enjoying the sessions as well as how much they were learning. The researcher has also observed that since the study sessions began, each Wednesday night prayer session was now focused on praying for the community and for specific changes. The group began praying for specific community changes related to social, economic and racial disparity.

Observation Five - November 28, 2004, for the first time in the five year history of the church, the opening prayer as well as the altar prayer focused on praying for the community rather than praying for the church and its needs. The researcher believes that the members are beginning to understand that the church is connected to the community and that unless the church is conscious of that fact and earnestly prays on behalf of the community, the church has neglected to fulfill its obligation. Expressions were made by the context associates as well as other members following the first service of the prayer campaign concerning how awesome the service was. Many associates shared that they were able to wear their prayer campaign button to work, which gave them the opportunity

to share what the church was doing to make a difference in the community. Some members requested buttons to give to co-workers who had requested them.

Observation Six – December 1, 2004, there was a continued focus on the community during the group's prayer time. There was a discussion about the first Sunday service of the prayer campaign. Several members of the group expressed how excited they were to be part of what God was doing through the Columbus House of Hope Church. One member shared with the group that she informed her supervisor of what the church was doing and asked her if there was anything specific she would like for her church to be praying for. The supervisor shared several requests with the context associate and the group prayed for those requests that night during the praise and prayer hour.

Some general observations were not anticipated. Two context associates used information they learned from the study sessions on the prayer tradition of black people to illustrate for others the power of prayer to change things during a Sunday morning adult Bible class. Another member shared her testimony before the congregation concerning the respect her supervisor has for her because he knows "she is a praying woman." The member also expressed that she prayed before the prayer campaign, but that the prayer campaign had transformed her life even more and she thanked God for it.

Person-To-Person Final Interviews

In determining whether or not the contextual associates had gained new knowledge and understanding of the church's responsibility to pray on behalf of the community and for community change and whether or not their commitment levels were enhanced as a result of this project, the researcher conducted five person-to-person

interviews. Individual interviews were audio recorded. Associates were asked for their responses to five open ended questions (Appendix H).

Question 1 As a result of the "Prayer Campaign," what new knowledge or insights have you gained concerning the church's responsibility to pray for the community and for community change?

Comments

Participant # 1

The new insight I've have gained is the fact that the welfare of the city and to pray for it is something that God and His Word has commanded the church to be aware of and to do. I've never really thought that the church could change the community, but as we did the prayer campaign my eyes have been so open to what God expects of the church. If we want change in the community, if we want change in the nation, it starts with the church because God has commanded it in His word.

Participant # 2

It was important because it drew us together as a family to pray. The outside is our family too, before I didn't see the community affecting me. When you started explaining it, God opened my eyes. I need to pray not only for this little area, but for other areas too because I am a part of the community. I see prayer as changing things and tearing down things that we may feel we can't accomplish, but God can through prayer.

Participant # 3

Well, I'm more excited now than I was about how prayer can change so many things. I didn't think about prayer changing things. I didn't think we were supposed to pray for the city. I really didn't. But I can see changes coming and I'm very excited about the changes I see coming now. I try to remember every day to pray for all our leaders because the rules they make will affect us. And it's just so exciting now, knowing how prayer can change things. I want to go back to the old timey faith of the meaning of prayer and how it changed so many things in our ancestors' time. I'm so excited now.

Participant # 4

I've always known that it's the church's responsibility to pray for our community and our community leaders, but I had not taken it to heart as I have now especially since gaining more understanding of God's word concerning praying for our community where God has placed us. I was reading in the New Testament about caring for

our officials and in the book of Jeremiah where God tells us to pray for our community just really drove the point home. And our community and our nation need the church as a whole to keep them lifted up before God.

Participant # 5

We definitely need to pray for our community because of the things that are going on now, the killing, black on black crime, there's just so much going on now. I learned it is a great opportunity for me to pray for my community every morning. Toynia, my wife, is so powerful. When she prays, I just listen to her pray. I know she's praying for everything, from the dogs to the cats. She prays for the community. She really does pray for the community. If I could learn how to pray like she does, I would probably be a prayer king or something. I learned that prayer is a powerful thing and we all need to pray.

Question 2 How has your commitment level to pray for your community been affected by what you have learned?

Comments

Participant # 1

As a true worshipper, follower and true committed person to the things of God there comes responsibilities and I feel I am responsible. Whether anyone else is responsible or not I have to fulfill my responsibility by being committed to those things I have learned during this whole prayer campaign. Now I know to pray for my local politicians. I know now how to pray for other church leader and how to keep my pastors lifted in prayer. I know now how to pray for the leadership of this country as a result of the prayer campaign. To be honest, I never really took thought to praying for our president. I never really got concerned or felt connected to the affairs of this nation. I thought that it was something high up there. That it was so high that I could never make a change in it. But my eyes have been opened to know that one little prayer can make a world of difference.

Participant # 2

I spend more time praying about what goes on in the community. Especially for abused women. I find myself praying all the time for them, I guess because I was a part of abuse. I pray especially for those where I work. I find myself praying more for the kids. I am at peace when I pray and that causes me to pray even more. I think it's something about prayer that connects us with people even though they don't know we're praying for them.

Participant # 3

I try to remember every day now, to pray for our community and for our leaders.

Participant # 4

My commitment level has gone up tremendously. In the past, I would pray for our community leaders in times of crises, President's Day and every now and then. But now I lift them up several times a week.

Participant # 5

I make praying every day my personal obligation. I feel I know what I'm praying about now. I used to pray the same prayer, but now I pray what's on my heart. Whatever God puts on my heart, that's what I'm praying about.

Question 3 What would you say were the key components of the prayer campaign?

Comments

Participant #1

The key component of the campaign started with our ancestors. It's so awesome to me to think of how in slavery times when they prayed expecting God to relieve them. They prayed not knowing if they would ever see change, but they prayed for change and as a result of their prayers I am living in the change they prayed for. So the strongest component of the whole campaign was the kick-off, giving us the root of prayer. And I am so thankful to know that our ancestors prayed in season and out of season. How the Holy Spirit gave them the wisdom to pray among themselves all around the slave master. That is so powerful to me. I thank God for this being brought back to the forefront.

Participant # 2

My family not only starting the day off with prayer, but now coming home at the end of the day and gathering together as a family to pray.

Participant # 3

Just coming to realize that we are to pray for our leaders and that we are not supposed to talk down about them. That's what excited me. We go to the poll and vote and if they don't work out then the next time we vote for somebody who is righteous. Once we find out that that's what we are supposed to do then we pray about whoever is running then we cast our vote.

Participant # 4

I think the most important is the truth of God's Word because most people, even in our congregation as I kind of flippantly said earlier, pray every now and then. But God has been telling us from the beginning that we should lift up our leaders and our community up to Him. I think the awareness of that and I think the awareness as a black congregation or as a black people is that of our fore parents and how they prayed for change and the evidence of that change from the lives we have in this country. I think that the knowledge that was given, the understanding that was given is the key components. The Bible says get understanding. And the prayer campaign gave us, gave me in particular, a better understanding of the importance of praying for our community.

Participant # 5

Just learning what you preached about. I need to hear everything that's going on about prayer. I wish we could have filled the whole church up with everybody so everybody could hear what you were saying because it was to the point, it was true and I think God used you to just uplift us all. I was happy, glad and had peace with everything that went on with the campaign. I loved the songs we sang and the songs you asked me to sing, I was tickled pink to do them. Now that may be the wrong color, but I was happy to do them.

Question 4 What are some of the community changes you feel your church, the Columbus House of Hope Church should be praying for as a result of the prayer campaign?

Comments

Participant #1

Some of the changes I think the churches could pray for are more unity among the races, more involvement and more things that would create unity. For example, with this new movie that's coming out, "The Diary of a Mad Black Woman." That bothers me because that creates division. Why can't it be, The Diary of a Mad Woman." Why does it have to be a black woman? When you say a black woman it creates division because some white women may think it's not for me it's just for black women. But you have all races and ethnic groups of mad women. I think you would bring a lot of unity if you were to say, The Diary of a Mad Woman, then you would have black women, white women, Hispanic women and other women. This is a way to create unity instead of division.

Participant # 2

We should be praying that people in public housing understand that they have an option and that they don't have to live in public housing. They can be independent like me. They can make it as a low-income family and not depend on government assistance.

Participant # 3

Well what comes to mind is the incident with Kenneth Walker. It's kinda on my mind about justice and I know we're all about justice. And I don't know exactly what we're going to do but I know it's something that we're going to do to stand up for justice for everybody, not just for him, but everybody. And sometimes I feel kind of sad when we go to court and then the person who's got the most money sometimes is the one who comes out. But that's not the way the Lord wants it. He wants us to be treated equally under the law. And that's what I'm excited about, to be able to get up and being able to stand up for this person over here when they don't know that they got somebody to stand up for them. Oh, I just get all excited. And we should be praying that more of our members get committed to stand with us knowing that all of us have to stand together as a body for justice.

Participant # 4

I think we should pray for Christian leaders, men and women of integrity. I think we should pray for our city on behalf of our young and our youth, especially along the lines of education. I think we should pray for our city as far as justice being done, makes no difference what color, ethnic group or nationality they are, but primarily for Christian leadership.

Participant # 5

Pray that all young people have the same motivation as the ones who went to the Impact Conference in DC and that they will minister to other young people and keep telling their friends that God is real.

Question 5 When do you feel is the best time for our church to come together and pray for the community and community change?

Comments

Participant #1

Any time is a good time. And to me it doesn't have to be a collective body because I am the church. Each individual person is the church.

Participant # 2

Since we have most of our people there on Sunday, we can just take part of that time even if we need to ask for prayer request. Because I know most are not there on Wednesday night.

Participant # 3

Well, I often felt Wednesday night was a good night. But with me, I can get there any time. But I will go along with whenever the majority can come. That's when I will be there. But so far we've been doing pretty good on Wednesday and we're seeing more and more people come. But we've just got to be more committed to come.

Participant # 4

I think every time we get together we should lift our community. Sometimes things do happen that we need to get together, but primarily I think during worship service, but mostly during our prayer sessions on Wednesdays.

Participant # 5

Probably Sunday, we seem to get the most people here on Sunday. I would love to do it on Wednesday, but with me and Toynia working, I think Sunday would be a great time.

The dominant themes that ran through the responses to the final interview questions were that, before the prayer campaign, most participants did not know that it was the church's responsibility to pray for the welfare of their community and for its people, but now that they know and understand, they have begun to practice what they have learned.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Reflection

Intercessory Prayer Really Does Change Things

It was Tuesday morning, March 22, 2005 as the writer sat on her living room sofa with her laptop, putting the final touches to her methodology paper before the next peer meeting in Dayton, Ohio, which was the following day, when the telephone rang. Her mother on the other end of the telephone said, “Melon” and paused. The writer could tell she was choked up and couldn’t speak. Instinctively, she knew exactly what it was that she could not say because of the tears and overwhelming joy she was experiencing. Finally her mother spoke. “Meylon, I want you to know that I heard from my child last night.” Her child and my brother was Calvin Wayne Tillman. Wayne is the youngest of eleven children. No one in my family had heard from Wayne in fifteen years, not even Mama. Because of the jubilation of my heart, I too was speechless for a moment. Tears began to stream down my face and when the writer could talk, the only thing she could muster up was, “praise the Lord.” For fifteen years, our family had interceded on Wayne’s behalf. And God was faithful to the promise found in Matthew 7:7, which says, “Ask and it shall be given.”¹ God does not put a timeline on when we will receive what

¹ Matt. 7:7

we ask for. God simply said to ask. The writer talked to Wayne that morning for almost two hours when the telephone conversation was interrupted by another call from our oldest sister in Mississippi. She had also received the news about Wayne. The son and brother that was lost for 15 years had been found and we believe it was because of intercessory prayer.

With the same kind of motivation and perseverance that allowed the Tillman family to foresee change within their family, God's people must be motivated and must persevere in intercessory prayer in order to see change within their communities. The motivation for the Tillman family was that they refused to accept life without the youngest son.

The motivation for change within our communities should be that Christians refuse to accept life without social political and economic justice for all people. In Columbus, Georgia, an unjust system failed to prosecute the person responsible for killing Kenneth Walker, a young black male, December 10, 2005. This incident opened the eyes of many to the harsh reality of an evil and unjust system of government.

However, through intercessory prayer for the community and for community change, the church will inevitably take its stand against the plight of the community, as God changes hearts, and will deal earnestly with those in positions of power and authority concerning injustices. God is establishing the Columbus House of Hope Church as an instrument of social, political and economic change within the community.

Realizing this ministry project is still in its infancy and that the Columbus House of Hope Church has many miles to tread in the area of intercessory prayer, the writer is amazed at what God has already done. She is encouraged not only by the changes that have taken place within the ministry as a result of prayer, but most of all by the changes that are evident in the lives of God's people, and especially in her life. What better way to

be catapulted to another level of usefulness in the kingdom than through an increased knowledge and understanding of what it really means for the church to intercede on behalf of the community in which it exists. For all intents and purposes, the direction of this project began with more ambiguity than I care to mention (which was noted in chapter 5), however, through much prayer, determination, and the help of eager participants, it was a joy to see how this project unfolded and how everything worked together.

The data collected from the community survey/questionnaires, observations, and final interviews confirmed that, while many Christians desire to see change in their communities and believe that God has the power to change anything, many were unaware that God's Word commands the Church to pray for the community and for community change.

Community Survey/Questionnaire

The survey administered both in Columbus, Georgia and at the Franchise Missionary Baptist Church revealed that many Christians desire change in their community, but are unaware that God has commanded the Church to seek the welfare of the community and to intercede on its behalf in order to make the necessary changes a reality. The writer was surprised at the number of people who desired change in their community, believed that it was the responsibility of the church to pray, but were not involved with a prayer group. This is an indication that, at the local church level, more commitment to corporate prayer is needed. However, what thrilled the writer most was that the result of the survey showed that almost all of the participants in the survey believed that God had the power to change anything—which is a step in the right direction.

Sessions on the Prayer Tradition of Black People

The writer's life and perhaps the lives of those members who attended the four week study on the prayer tradition of black people will be forever changed as a result of the knowledge and understanding of how our slave ancestors persevered in prayer—prayer that changed not only the inhumane condition of a people, but to some degree the overall social, political and economic condition of a nation of oppressed people. The sessions highlighted not only Black people's commitment to prayer in order to change their plight, but also their active involvement in assuring the reality of those changes for generations to come. The remark the writer continued to hear repeatedly was, "the whole church needs to hear this."

Sunday Services

It was wonderful to see how the participants grew and came together during the prayer campaign. There was also a display of increased faith in the power of prayer. It appeared that the more the members understood the church's call to pray on behalf of the community, the more they became involved in the implementation of the project. The songs that were sung each week were all in reference to prayer and helped to re-enforce our call to intercessory prayer in a greater way. It wasn't that we had the right songs as much as having the right person to sing them. There was a level of excitement and enthusiasm in the church that the writer had never experienced before.

Prayer Requests from City Officials/Leaders

The purpose of the meetings with the various city leaders was to gather specific concerns and prayer requests in order for the church to be able to focus on these during

our prayer time. However, the meeting became much more than gathering prayer requests. It obviously became a door of opportunity not only to gather specific concerns of those who are making decisions that shape our lives, but an opportunity to be able to go back to those officials at a later date to address other community-based concerns and issues.

Prayer Request from Lay Citizens

With the same motivation for meeting with community leaders, the writer also met with several lay citizens. Once they understood the reason for the visit, most citizens willingly expressed their concerns/request for the community—which were quite different from those of the community leaders. The lay citizens' primary concerns and requests were issues that had a greater effect on individuals, such as jobs, prescription expenses, unlawful drug use and drug trafficking and more programs for helping people. The writer saw this too as more than an opportunity to gather requests from lay citizens, but as a beginning in developing a relationship of trust with the lay people of the community.

Observation

The purpose of the observation was to show that, as the participants' level of knowledge and understanding of the Church's responsibility to intercede for the community increased, their level of commitment to engage in intercessory prayer would be enhanced. The results were pleasing. The common themes/expressions that occurred during the observation process was, "I never knew that and I learned so much." The writer believed this observation was one way to capture a true assessment of the impact of the project without the writer influencing the participants' responses.

Final Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with participants being asked five open-ended questions to determine if there was significant knowledge and understanding gained from the project. Five people were interviewed and all five expressed a significant increase in knowledge and understanding of their responsibility to intercede on behalf of the community.

Although the researcher used mixed method research (survey, observation and interviews), it was the qualitative data that proved the writer's hypothesis. The interviews and observations validated the researcher's claim that with increased knowledge and understanding of the church's responsibility to pray on behalf of the community, God's people will begin to engage in intercessory prayer as a way of life.

Suggestions for Future Development

Because of the positive responses to the study sessions on the prayer tradition of Black people, the writer would suggest involving the entire congregation. This could mean a couple of things. Efforts could be made with the help of the context associates to advertise and encourage all members to attend the special sessions on Wednesday nights following the praise and prayer hour or these sessions could be included as part of the weekly Sunday services that focus on praying for the community. It would be incorporated into the weekly sermon as an illustration or as a separate aspect of the worship service.

The writer would also suggest that an outside preacher who is known for his or her commitment to intercessory prayer and their involvement in the community, deliver

one of the Sunday sermons. This preacher can bring a different perspective on praying for the community and perhaps energize the church and the researcher in a fresh, new way.

Recommendations

For future research into intercessory prayer for the community, the writer recommends further investigation into the following works: *Intercessory Prayer: How God Can Use Your Prayers to Move Heaven and Earth* by Dutch Sheets; *Possessing the Gates of the Enemy* by Cindy Jacobs; *Watchman Prayer: How to Stand Guard and Protect Your Family, Home and Community* by Dutch Sheets; *Prayer Shield: How to Intercede for Pastors, Christian Leaders, and Others on the Spiritual Frontlines* by C. Peter Wagner; *Becoming a Prayer Warrior: A Guide to Effective and Powerful Prayer* by Beth Alves; and *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Prayer: Earthly License for Heavenly Interference* by Myles Munroe.

Theological Reflection

Earlier, mention was made of the visible changes that have taken place in the lives of many of the members involved in the implementation of this project and especially in her life—which include changes such as praying for the community and praying for specific needs and situations concerning the welfare of the people. It is a joy to hear the adult Sunday school teacher asking the member who closes the class time to remember to pray for our community. It matters that those who attend Wednesday night prayer and praise hour request that prayers are not only prayed for the church and the unsaved, but that the members also pray for incidences of violence, political issues and social justice.

The writer wants to take the liberty to expound on the impact this project has had on her life spiritually, personally, and professionally—changes she could not have imagined. First, the spiritual changes took shape as she began to pray concerning this project and the direction God wanted the project to take. She knew that if this project was truly to be what God wanted it to be, she would have to submit to God's leading. This meant stepping beyond her comfort zone.

The ministry project the writer chose literally meant becoming involved with the community. There were scheduled meeting with city official and leaders to ascertain their concerns for the community and the changes they would like to see. It was not easy for her to sit down face to face with the sheriff whose deputy was responsible for taking the life of an innocent young Black man a year earlier when there had still been no charge brought against the deputy. The natural personal desire was to discuss the events on that infamous night in December 2003 when the Sheriff's Deputy killed an innocent young Black man. But it was better to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and stick to the subject matter at hand. The writer's nature is to be confrontational where there is an issue of injustice and usually would not hesitate to express her concerns about the situation. However, she somehow knew that that would not be her last meeting with the Sheriff and that God, through this project, was preparing the way for future encounters, not only with law enforcement, but with the Muscogee County School Board, the mayor of Columbus, and a host of other institutions and agencies.

As a result of this ministry project, there is a sense of personal obligation to the community to seek its welfare by praying on its behalf. As one seeks God for the good of the community, one must be attentive to God's direction in any given situation. A single person cannot do everything that needs to be done in the community. God does not want

us to try to accomplish everything. People must desire to do their part and to be vessels for change.

It was January 2005; approximately 3:30 am in the morning the writer was awakened from a restless night. She knew it was God who woke her and that God wanted to talk. She got out of bed, went over to the window and began looking out over the snow-covered city of Dayton, Ohio. It was the week of intensive for United Theological Seminary and the theme for the week was, "Faith in Action in the City." It was 3:30 am Wednesday morning and God had already used the first two days of the intensive to heighten her involvement in social justice for the oppressed in her city, Columbus, Georgia. For as long as the writer can remember, she has carried a burden for the downtrodden—for those who are unable to help themselves in matters of injustice. God used this ministry project and those first two days of intensive in January 2005 to fully capture the writer's attention and to let her know that it was time to answer God's call as an advocate for social, economic and political justice.

It was that night in January that she knew she could no longer hide behind the scenes, professionally. She had a job to do in the community. Although God was still preparing her for the task, she also knew that night that God was waiting for her response to the call. Unlike the seven years it took for her to answer God's call to the ministry, that night she said, "yes" to God. Yes, she would be all God wants her to be and yes, she would do all God wants her to do to bring about change in the community, beginning with intercessory prayer for the community.

The aforementioned is how the writer believes intercessory prayer can change the community. Clearly, it is not enough for Christians to live in a community where there is a dire need for change, yet spiritually sit on the sidelines, never confronting those issues that

effect the well-being of the community. Intercessory prayer is God's way of first transforming the believer's mind and heart so that he or she will see the wrong that God sees and feel the way God feels about that wrong. Then through intercessory prayer, God gives a determination to labor toward correcting the wrongs within the community in order that there might be peace and quiet.

This ministry project satisfies the purpose and objective of the focus group "Urban Development and Intercultural Communications." This project has greatly enhanced the writer's ability to prayerfully look closely at and evaluate the social, political, economic and cultural conditions of the community and to actively seek ways of improving those conditions. Further, the Columbus House of Hope Church's leadership and members have been strengthened spiritually and encouraged to actively participate in what God is doing in the community as a result of this intercessory prayer model.

This prayer model can be replicated by other congregations regardless of faith orientation, denomination, cultural, social or economic backgrounds. The user of this model will want to engage the prayer tradition of their particular culture. However, a brief study of the prayer tradition of another culture will enhance and broaden the participant's perspective on intercessory prayer. For instance, an African-American group might want to consider incorporating some basic knowledge concerning the prayer tradition of the Muslim faith along with their study of the prayer tradition of black folks.

The church with the five million dollar yearly budget as well as the new church with a five hundred dollar budget can both benefit from this ministry model. There was some cost to the church for banners, buttons and sweatshirts. However, none of these items are necessary in implementing the project. In fact, the writer believes so strongly in the impact of the project on the participants, that there is absolutely no doubt in her mind

that this ministry project will be a success with or without purchase of banners, buttons or sweat shirts.

Regardless of the cultural community, there are problems and issues that the church must face. Because the church does not exist in a vacuum, we must take the opportunities to build relationships with individuals as well as those groups of people who help to shape everyday life. Regardless of denomination, the user of this ministry model can and should engage those individuals within the community who are responsible for making political, economic and social decisions and inquire about those issues that are of concern to those leaders of the community. As those particular requests are gathered, participants can begin to intercede for their communities with specific issues and requests that are indigenous to that community.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greatest impact of this project was realizing that when the church commits to intercession for the community, the initial changes will occur within the minds and hearts of God's people which will inevitably position them to be instruments of God to bring about change in their communities. The church is long overdue for recognizing that God's people are to be change agents. The church must also come to grips with the fact that changes do not always occur immediately. God's people must not give up praying, but must persevere in intercessory prayer as our slave ancestors did, even if they do not experience change themselves, but pray with the expectation that one day their children or their children's children will experience the change prayed for.

Our slave ancestors prayed fervently against the institution of slavery and for freedom. For many, freedom from the enslaver never became a reality, but they continued

to pray and trust the Lord because they believed that one day God would set the people free. Slaves were used in incredible ways by God to ensure the freedom of countless Black people before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Slave gatherings not only included a time of prayer and praise, but also a time to strategize in opposition to slavery. They prayed and God used them to do something about the condition. For instance, the Underground Railroad, which began as a desire in Harriet Tubman's heart, grew into a reality. Harriet was convinced her leadership was given to her through prayer to God.²

Black people during the civil rights movement not only prayed, but they did something. There were prayer meetings and demonstrations, prayer meetings and boycotts. Today, years later, the freedom of Black people in America is a reality because of the intercessory prayers of our slave ancestors and those who prayed, fought, and struggled for civil rights. Our ancestors prayed and they did something about the plight of their communities.

One of the greatest impacts of this ministry model is seen in the Men Encouraging Men ministry that developed shortly after this model was implemented. The men's ministry leader, as well as others, attributes the continued growth of men in the church to the power of intercessory prayer that began when the church was only a Bible study. There has also been evidence of the impact of prayer on the community. In the spring of 2005 parents, students and teachers of the Muscogee County School District were told that the funds that were previously allocated for special programs to help high-risk teens had been cut and the programs would not continue. The House of Hope Church began to

² Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 101.

pray concerning this particular issue. After several weeks of interceding on behalf of the students, parents, teachers, and those who make decisions that affect the students, it was announced that at least one of the programs would definitely continue this school year and funds somehow would be allocated.

If the Church desires to see change within its community and believes that God has the power to institute change, then the church is long overdue in activating its faith in the community by seeking the God of all power through intercessory prayer. However, it is not enough for the church of God to engage only in praying for the welfare of the community. It must become involved in establishing it.

And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile,
and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have
welfare.³

³ Jer. 29:7

DEVELOPING AN INTERCESSORY PRAYER MINISTRY THAT FOCUSES ON PRAYING FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE

TIMELINE

August 2004 - January 2005

August 26	Selected and sent letters to Professional Associates
September 22	Select and met with Context Associates
October 6	Prayer Tradition of Black People (Harold Carter) ¹ Study Session 1 Observation
October 13	Prayer Tradition of Black People (Harold Carter) ² Study Session 2 Met with Context Associates and collect suggested questions for Questionnaire and Pre and Post Tests
October 20	Prayer Tradition of Black People (Harold Carter) ³ Study Session 3 Meet with Context Associates and Distribute Questionnaires
October 27	Prayer Tradition of Black People (Harold Carter) ⁴ Study Session 4 Observation
October 31	Collected Questionnaires from Context Associates
November 10	Met with Context Associates
November 15	Met with Mayor of Columbus, Georgia Met with Sheriff of Columbus, Georgia
November 17	Meet with Superintendent of Muscogee County School Board Columbus, Georgia Took design for Prayer Campaign Banner and Buttons to sign company to be printed
November 24	Picked up Prayer Campaign Banner and Buttons
November 28	Announced four week "Prayer Campaign" to Congregation Distributed Prayer Campaign Buttons to be worn throughout campaign
	Preached Prayer Sermon 1
November 29	Met with Professional Associates
December 1	Met with Context Associates
December 5	Preached Prayer Sermon 2
December 12	Preached Prayer Sermon 3
December 19	Preached Prayer Sermon 4
January 12	Met with President of Muscogee County Clergy Association Clergy Association Met with Context Associates

¹ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer tradition of Black People* (Gateway Press, Inc. Baltimore, MD, 1995), 26.

² Ibid, 100.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, 104.

APPENDIX A
TIME LINE/CONTEXT AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATES

March 1	Met with Professional Associates
March 4	Completed Final Interviews with Context Associates
May 20	Presented First Draft of Final Document
August	Final Examination

Below is a description of the tasks necessary to complete the project “Developing an Intercessory Prayer Ministry That Focuses on Praying for the Community and For Community Change.” These tasks were completed between August 2005 and January 2005.

August 26

Select and send letters to Professional Associates

Three individuals were contacted by telephone and asked to serve as Professional Associates. The three agreed and were immediately sent a “Thank You” letter, a copy of my Spiritual Autobiography, Contextual Analysis and Synergy Paper to help them understand my ministry project. The Associates were also advised of a future meeting.

September 22

Select and meet with Context Associates/Co-Researchers

This group received individual letters to inform them of my ministry project and advise of their selection to serve as a co-researcher for the completion of my Doctor of ministry degree project. Associates were also advised of their role as a co-researcher and were asked to sign an agreement to show their willingness to serve.

Observation

October 6

Observation

Prayer Tradition of Black People (Harold Carter)¹ Study Session 1

This session highlighted the African influence during slavery and individual initiative in finding God by relating to God in prayer. One method the slaves used in order to pray without getting caught was the use of the pot. The pot was used as a way of catching the sound of the slaves’ prayers in order to prevent the master from hearing the slaves at worship.

Observation

October 13

Observation

Prayer Tradition of Black People (Harold Carter)² Study Session 2

This session highlighted slaves’ liberation through prayer. Henry “Box” Brown, a slave from Richmond, Virginia, shared how his mother instilled in him the power of prayer, which eventually led to his freedom.

Observation

Met with Context Associates

¹ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Gateway Press, Inc. Baltimore, MD, 1995), 26.

² Ibid., 100.

Each Context Associate was asked to provide questions that could be used for the questionnaire and/or the Pre and Post Tests. Questions were collected and there was a discussion about the Prayer Tradition of Black People Study Sessions.

October 20

Prayer Tradition of Black People (Harold Carter)³ Study Session 3

This session highlighted Booker T. Washington whose daughter observed the powerful force of prayer in his life and attributed his major accomplishments to his commitment to prayer. Included in the discussion was Harriett Tubman who was convinced her leadership was given to her through prayer to God and Sojourner Truth who cried out to God to give her a name with a “*handle* to it.” At the end of the session questionnaires were distributed among the Context Associates to be filled out by them and given out randomly within the church and community.

October 27

Prayer Tradition of Black People (Harold Carter)⁴ Study Session 4

This Study Session highlighted George Washington Carver who believed that God worked miracles through prayers and Nannie Helen Burroughs who stood in a cornfield before the founding of a school for girls, and declared by faith and fervent prayer that a school would be erected to carry on the work of Christ in training Christian women.

Observation

There were various comments about the four study sessions on the Prayer Tradition of Black People. There seemed to be an increase of excitement with the members. One member stated that she was sharing with her co-worker what she had learned in each session. Another member stated she really enjoyed the sessions and learned so much.

October 31

Collect Questionnaires from Context Associates.

Questionnaires were collected from Context Associates for evaluation.

November 10

Met with Context Associates

This meeting was used to discuss the details for the upcoming “Prayer Campaign” kick-off scheduled for November 28. We discussed using campaign banner, buttons, sweat shirts, caps, tote bags, etc. as promotional items.

³ Ibid., 100-02.

⁴ Ibid., 104.

November 15

Met with Mayor of Columbus, Georgia

Met with Mayor to inform him of the ministry project and how the project affects the city of Columbus. I was given many requests for House of Hope Church to pray for the city.

Some requests were:

- Unity for the city
- Love for each other
- A greater understanding of each other's religion
- Earnest decision making on the part of government

Met with Sheriff of Columbus, Georgia

Met with Sheriff to inform him of the ministry project and how the project relates to the city of Columbus. The House of Hope Church was asked to pray that:

- Sheriff will make sound decisions
- The city would have an unbiased media
- There will be unity

November 17

Met with Superintendent of Muscogee County School Board, Columbus, Georgia.

Met with Superintendent to inform him of the ministry project and how the project affects the city of Columbus. I was given many requests to have the church pray for. Some requests were:

- A safe environment for students
- Support of parents who are actively involved in child's well being
- Parents and teachers become role models through their actions
- Community has empathy and understanding for all people

Take design for Campaign Banner and Buttons to Sign Company to be printed.

November 24

Pick up Campaign Banner and Buttons

November 28

Announce *Prayer Campaign* with theme "Seek the Welfare of the City and Pray on its Behalf", Jeremiah 29:7. Distribute campaign buttons to be worn during the four weeks of campaigning. Congregational song to be sung each week, "*Let Us Pray For Our City on Our Knees*" (Song to the tune *Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees*). All other song during worship is related to prayer.

Observation

Preach Prayer Sermon 1

Sermon title "Your Call to Pray for Your Community". Sermon Text, I Timothy 2:1-6. Sermon Outline:

I Introduction

II. Pray for All People

A. Supplications

B. Prayers

- C. Intercessions
- D. Thanksgiving

- III. Pray for Civil Authority
 - A. Leading a quiet and peaceful life
 - B. Leading a godly and holy life

- IV. Pray for All People to be Saved
 - A. God as Savior
 - B. One true God
 - C. One mediator

V. Conclusion

A Time of Reflection

Time was given to reflect on the Worship Service and the responses of individual as well as the overall attitude of the congregation before, during and following the service.

November 29

Meet with Professional Associates

This meeting is to discuss timeline, evaluate progress of project and make suggestions for completion of project.

December 1

Met with Context Associates

Discuss timeline, progress of project and get feedback concerning prayer campaign.

Observation

December 5

Preach Prayer Sermon 2

Sermon Title, "Prayer, Getting to Know The Lord." Sermon Text, Matthew 26:41

Sermon Outline:

- I. Pray Continually
- II. Petitioning For Our Needs
- III. Praise and Thanksgiving
- IV. An Attitude for Forgiveness
- V. Praying Without Doubt
- VI. Praying for Our Leaders
- VII. Intercessions for Others

December 12

Observation

Preach Prayer Sermon 3

Sermon Title, "Prayer...The Power to Change Our Community, Part I." Sermon

Text, II Chronicles 7:14:

- I. Introduction
- II. God's People Called by His Name
- III. Humility of God's People
 - A. True Repentance
- IV. Unity of God's People
 - A. Praying as one
- V. Conclusion

December 15

Observation

December 19

Observation

Preach Prayer Sermon 4

Sermon Title, "Prayer...The Power to Change Your Community, Part II." Sermon

Text, II Chronicle 7:14:

- I. Introduction
- II. Unceasing Prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17)
 - A. During Good Times
 - B. During Difficult Times
- III. Confident Expectation (Mark 11:24)
 - A. The power is God
- IV. Praying in Jesus' Name
 - A. Identifying with Jesus' character (John 14:13-14)
 - B. Identifying with Jesus' purpose (II Corinthians 5:17-19)
- V. Conclusion

Observation

January 12

Met with Context Associates to Review data

March 1

Met with Professional Associates to review data and to update on progression of project.

March 4

Completed final interviews with Context Associates.

August

Final Exam

Columbus House of Hope, Inc.

"A Place Where People Meet and Lives Are Changed"

Dr. Brel Clark
Pastor

Meylon T. Clark, M. Div.
Pastor

September 22, 2004

Dear Member,

This letter is to inform you of my research project which is a requirement for a Doctor of Ministry degree from the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio and to invite you to assist me in completing this project by serving as a contextual associate. As an associate and co-researcher, you are not the subject I will be studying. I will be studying myself in relation to you. Therefore, you are central to my research. My project focus is...*Developing a Prayer Ministry That Focuses on Intercessory Prayer as a Weapon for Community Change.*

My intent is to only report information that is in the public domain and within the law. I can assure you that no sensitive information from you will be used without prior permission from the originator. No real names or places will be used without specific permission to do so.

As a researcher, I am dependent upon you as a contextual associate/co-researcher. My research cannot happen without you. I will keep you informed of how my research is going and welcome your most valuable feedback.

Because of Christ,

Meylon T. Clark, MDiv.
Pastor

2703 Beacon Avenue-Columbus, Georgia 31904
706.653.8070

COVENANT AGREEMENT
AS
CONTEXTUAL ASSOCIATE

I _____ hereby enter into
agreement with Pastor Meylon Tillman Clark to serve as her contextual
associate/co-researcher in assisting her in completing her focus project...
Developing a Prayer Ministry That Focuses on Intercessory Prayer as a
Weapon for Community Change in partial fulfillment for the requirement of
Doctor of Ministry at the United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.

Sign

Date

Columbus House of Hope, Inc.

"A Place Where People Meet and Lives Are Changed"

Dr. Brel Clark
Pastor

Meylon T. Clark, M. Div.
Pastor

August 25, 2004

Dear Dr.

I am thrilled and appreciative that you have agreed to serve as one of my Professional Associates as I move toward completion of a Doctor of Ministry Degree. To better understand your participation as a Professional Associate, I have listed (according to the United Theological Seminary Handbook of the DMin. Program) a few ways your contribution can help to assure my success in this program. It is expected that Professional Associates will function in several ways:

1. Provide input for the program, including resources, suggested courses, worship, laboratories or other educational experiences that would enhance the program.
2. Assist in the process of analysis and reflection by questioning and probing to assure depth of understanding in academic and experiential learning.
3. Assure that the disciplines each Associate represents are treated with faithfulness and integrity.

As a student I am committed to keeping you as a Professional Associate aware of the components of the program and how they are functioning. It is my desire to ensure that your input at any stage of the program is achieved. I look forward to meeting with you and Dr. Brel Clark in the near future; at which time I will provide a Professional Associate Certification form for you to fill out.

Again, thank you for your commitment to serve as a Professional Associate.

Because of Christ,

Meylon Tillman Clark, MDiv.

Attachment

2703 Beacon Avenue-Columbus, Georgia 31904
706.653.8070

APPENDIX B

SURVEYS

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist the pastor of Columbus House of Hope Church in completing the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry Degree.

*****PLEASE RETURN TO THE PASTOR BY SUNDAY OCTOBER 31, 2004*****

SECTION ONE: Please check the correct answer.

1. Sex: Female ____ Male ____
2. Age Group: Under 12 ____ 12-20 ____ 21-35 ____ 36-50 ____ 51-65 ____
Over 65 ____
3. Marital Status: Single ____ Married ____ Divorced ____ Separated ____ Widowed ____
4. I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Yes ____ No ____
5. I attend church (except for extreme emergencies): All the time ____ Most of the time ____ Some of the time ____ Never ____
6. I am a member of Columbus House of Hope Church: Yes ____ No ____
7. I work in the community: Full Time ____ Part Time ____ Retired ____ Unemployed ____
8. I attend(ed) school in the community: Yes ____ No ____
9. My children attend(ed) school in the community: Yes ____ No ____
10. I feel like I am a part of the community: Yes ____ No ____

If you answered Yes to the above question, please tell (in one or two sentences) why you answered Yes. If you answered No, please tell (in one or two sentences) why you answered No.

SECTION TWO: Please check the correct answer.

1. I have a clear understanding of what prayer is: Yes ____ No ____
2. I understand why it is important to pray for others: Yes ____ No ____
3. I believe God hears my prayers: Yes ____ No ____
4. I believe changes will occur when Christians pray: Yes ____ No ____
5. I have seen changes occur because of prayer: Yes ____ No ____
6. I believe anyone can pray and God will answer them: Yes ____ No ____
7. I would like for God to change my community: Yes ____ No ____
8. I believe God has the power to change anything: Yes ____ No ____
9. I believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community: Yes ____
No ____
10. I am involved with a prayer group: Yes ____ No ____

**DATA FROM
COMMUNITY SURVEY**
(114 people were surveyed)

QUESTIONS/STATISTICS	RESPONSES
Sex	
Male	29
Female	84
Age Group	
Under 12	7
12-20	16
21-35	20
36-50	3
51-65	26
Over 65	6
Marital Status	
Single	41
Married	48
Divorced	12
Separated	4
Widowed	7
I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ	
Yes	111
No	3
I attend church (except for extreme emergencies)	
All the time	53
Most of the time	28
Some of the time	30
Never	2
I am a member of Columbus House of Hope Church	
Yes	42
No	72
I work in the community	
Full-time	36
Part-time	15
Retired	10
Unemployed	22
I attend(ed) school in the community	
Yes	53
No	60
My children attend(ed) school in the community	
Yes	41
No	50

I feel like I am part of the community	
Yes	101
No	12
If you answered “yes” to the above question, please tell (in one or two sentences) why you answered “yes.” If you answered “no” please tell (in one or two sentences) why you answered “no.”	
Responses	66
No Responses	48
I have a clear understanding of what prayer is	
Yes	110
No	4
I understand why it is important to pray for others	
Yes	113
No	1
I believe God hears my prayers	
Yes	108
No	2
I believe changes will occur when Christians pray	
Yes	113
No	1
I have seen changes occur because of prayer	
Yes	111
No	4
I believe anyone can pray and God will answer them	
Yes	98
No	3
I would like for God to change my community	
Yes	105
No	1
I believe God has the power to change anything	
Yes	112
No	0
I believe it is the church’s responsibility to pray for the community	
Yes	82
No	24
I am involved in a prayer group	
Yes	50
No	62

**QUESTIONS FROM SECTION II OF
QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. I believe changes will occur when Christians pray: Yes ___ No ___
2. I have seen changes occur because of prayer: Yes ___ No ___
3. I would like for God to change my community: Yes ___ No ___
4. I believe God has the Power to change anything: Yes ___ No ___
5. I believe it is the church's responsibility to pray
for the community: Yes ___ No ___
6. I am involved with a prayer group: Yes ___ No ___

CONDENSED DATA SUMMARY FROM COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Of the 111 participants attending church:

All the time	- 54 (except for extreme emergencies)
Most of the time	- 29
Some of the time	- 28

2. Those participants who are Christian and feel connected to the community:

Feel connected	- 101
Do not feel connected	- 9

3. Of the 54 participants who attend church all the time:

Believe changes will occur when Christians pray	- 53
Have seen changes occur because of prayer	- 54
Would like for God to change their community	- 49
Believe God has the power to change anything	- 54
Believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community	- 42
Involved with a prayer group	- 36

4. Of the 29 participants who attend church most of the time:

Believe changes will occur when Christians pray	- 29
Have seen changes occur because of prayer	- 29
Would like for God to change their community	- 26
Believe God has the power to change anything	- 28
Believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community	- 21
Involved with a prayer group	- 12

5. Of the 28 participants who attend church sometimes:

Believe changes will occur when Christians pray	- 26
Have seen changes occur because of prayer	- 27
Would like for God to change their community	- 28
Believe God has the power to change anything	- 28
Believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community	- 20
Involved with a prayer group	- 3

6. Out of the 102 participants who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and feel connected to the community:

Believe changes will occur when Christians pray	- 100
Have seen changes occur because of prayer	- 100
Would like for God to change their community	- 95
Believe God has the power to change anything	- 101
Believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community	- 81
Involved with a prayer group	- 48

7. Out of the 9 participants who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and do not feel connected to the community:

Believe changes will occur when Christians pray	- 9
Have seen changes occur because of prayer	- 9
Would like for God to change their community	- 9
Believe God has the power to change anything	- 9
Believe it is the church's responsibility to pray for the community	- 5
Involved with a prayer group	- 3

PILOT SURVEY DATA SUMMARY
(15 people were surveyed)

QUESTIONNAIRE	RESPONSES
Sex	
Male	2
Female	13
Age Group	
Under 12	
12-20	
21-35	4
36-50	2
51-65	4
Over 65	4
Marital Status	
Single	6
Married	3
Separated	
Divorced	5
Widowed	1
I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ	
Yes	15
No	
I attend church (except for extreme emergencies)	
All the time	13
Most of the time	2
Some of the time	
Never	
I am a member of Columbus House of Hope Church	
Yes	
No	
I work in the community	
Full-time	8
Part-time	1
Retired	5
Unemployed	
I attend (ed) school in the community	
Yes	7
No	8
My children attend (ed) school in the community	
Yes	8
I feel like I am part of the community	
Yes	13
No	1

If you answer “yes” to the above question, please tell (in one or two sentences) why you answered “yes.” If you answered “no” please tell (in one or two sentences) why you answered “no.”	
Responses	11
No Responses	4
I have a clear understanding of what prayer is	
Yes	15
No	
I understand why it is important to pray for others	
Yes	15
No	
I believe God hears my prayers	
Yes	15
No	
I believe changes will occur when Christians pray	
Yes	15
No	
I have seen changes occur because of prayer	
Yes	15
No	
I believe anyone can pray and God will answer them	
Yes	14
No	
I would like for God to change my community	
Yes	15
No	
I believe God has the power to change anything	
Yes	14
No	
I believe it is the church’s responsibility to pray for the community	
Yes	15
No	
I am involved with a prayer group	
Yes	9
No	6

APPENDIX C
STUDY SESSION OUTLINE

PRAYER TRADITION OF BLACK PEOPLE STUDY SESSIONS OUTLINE

Study Session One

1. Song
2. Scripture: Jeremiah 29:7, "And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare."¹
3. Prayer
4. Define prayer, intercede, community and change
5. Study, *Prayer Tradition of Black People*²
6. Group Discussion
7. Prayer requests from members
8. Team Prayer. This is where small groups of three to four members pray as a team for the community and for special prayer requests simultaneous.
9. Closing prayer

Study Session Two

1. Song
2. Scripture: Jeremiah 29:7
3. Prayer
4. Study, *Prayer Tradition of Black People*³
5. Group Discussion
6. Prayer requests
7. Circle Prayer. This is where members stand in a circle, holding hands and only those who would like to voice a prayer may do so.
8. Closing prayer

Study Session Three

1. Song
2. Scripture: Jeremiah 29:7
3. Prayer
4. Study, *Prayer Tradition of Black People*⁴

¹ Jer. 29:7

² Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 26.

³ Ibid., 100.

⁴ Ibid., 101-02.

5. Group Discuss
6. Prayer Requests
7. Team Prayer
8. Closing Prayer

Study Session Four

1. Song
2. Scripture: Jeremiah 29:7
3. Prayer
4. Study session, *Prayer Tradition of Black People*⁵
5. Group Discussion
6. Prayer Requests
7. Circle Prayer
8. Closing Prayer

⁵ Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1995), 104.

APPENDIX D
PRAYER CAMPAIGN

Prayer Campaign

"SEEK THE WELFARE OF THE CITY

AND PRAY ON ITS BEHALF"

 Columbus House of Hope Church

Jeremiah 29:7

PRAYER CAMPAIGN THEME SONG

“Let Us Pray For Our City”
(Sung to the tune “Let us Break Bread Together”)

Let Us Pray for Our City on Our Knees
Let Us Pray for Our City on Our Knees
When we fall on our knees
With our eyes to the holy One
Oh Lord may your perfect will be done

*Prayer
Campaign*

**"SEEK THE WELFARE
OF THE CITY AND
PRAY ON ITS BEHALF"**

Jeremiah 29:7



**Columbus House
of Hope Church**



APPENDIX E
SERMON OUTLINES

SERMON OUTLINE ONE

Sermon Title: "Your Call to Pray for Your Community"

Sermon Text: I Timothy 2:1-6

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties
And prayers, petitions and thanksgivings,
be made on behalf of all men,

2 for kings and all who are in authority
in order that we may lead a tranquil and
quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

3 This is good and acceptable in the sight
of God our Savior,

4 who desires all men to be saved and to
come to the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, and one mediator
also between God and men, the man Christ
Jesus,

6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all,
the testimony borne at the proper time.

- I. Introduction
- II. Pray for All
 - A. Supplications
 - B. Prayers
 - C. Intercessions
 - D. Thanksgiving
- III. Pray for Civil Authority
 - A. Leading a quiet and peaceful life
 - B. Leading a godly and holy life
- IV. Pray for All People to be Saved
 - A. God as Savior
 - B. One True God
 - C. One Mediator
- V. Conclusion

SERMON OUTLINE TWO

(By Pastor Brel Clark)

Sermon Title: Prayer, Getting To Know The Lord

Sermon Text: Matthew 26:41

“Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

- I. Pray Continually
- II. Petitioning For Our Needs
- III. Praise and Thanksgiving
- IV. An Attitude of Forgiveness
- V. Praying Without Doubt
- VI. Praying For Our Leaders
- VII. Intercessions for Others

SERMON OUTLINE THREE

Sermon Title: Prayer, The Power To Change Your Community (Part I)

Sermon Text: II Chronicles 7:14

14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

- I. Introduction
- II. God's People Called by His Name
- III. Humility of God's People
 - True Repentance
- IV. Unity of God's People
 - Praying as one
- V. Conclusion

SERMON OUTLINE FOUR

Sermon Title: Prayer, The Power To Change Your Community (Part II)

Sermon Text: II Chronicles 7:14

14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

- I. Introduction
- II. Unceasing Prayer (I Thessalonians 5:17)
 - A. During Good Times
 - B. During Difficult Times
- III. Confident Expectation (Mark 11:24)
 - The power is God
- IV. Praying in Jesus' Name
 - A. Identifying with Jesus' character (John 14:13-14)
 - B. Identifying with Jesus' purpose (II Corinthians 5:17-19)
- V. Conclusion

SERMON OUTLINE FIVE

Sermon Title: Prayer, Motivated by Love for Your Community

Sermon Text: Matthew 22:37-39

37 And He said to him, "You Shall Love
The Lord Your God With All Your Heart,
And With All Your Soul, And With All
Your Mind."

38 "This is the great and foremost com-
mandment.

39 "The second is like it, "You Shall Love
Your Neighbor As Yourself."

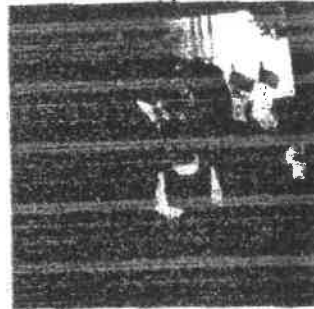
- I. Introduction
- II. Love Towards God
 - A. First command (Matthew 22:37, 38)
 - B. With all the heart (Matthew 22:37)
 - C. More important than ritual (Mark 12:31-33)
- III. Love Towards Christ
 - A. Manifested in obedience (John 14:15, 21, 23)
 - B. Leads to service (2 Corinthians 5:14)
- IV. Love Towards Others
 - A. Second Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39)
 - B. Commanded by Christ (John 13:34)
 - C. Described in detail (I Corinthians 13:1-13)
- V. Conclusion

APPENDIX F
PRAYER REQUEST FORM/NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

REQUEST/ANSWERThis image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. On the left side, there is a vertical margin line, creating a narrow left margin. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard ruled document.

DEPUTY SHOOTS, KILLS UNARMED MAN

Tragedy on I-185



Kenny Walker with Cheryl and 3-year-old daughter Kayla had this picture taken last week for holiday cards.

Veteran deputy placed on leave; sheriff says 39-year-old failed to comply with order to show hand

By MURIEL TAN
Staff Writer

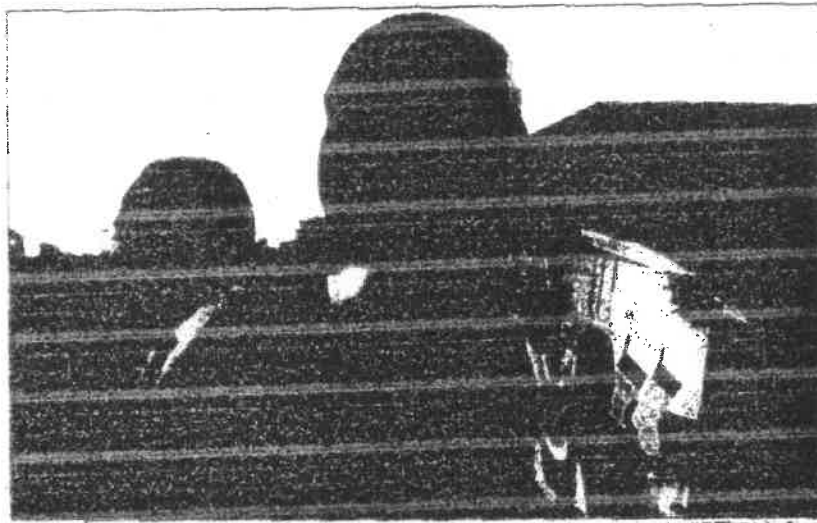
An unarmed 39-year-old Columbus man was fatally shot by a Muscogee County Sheriff's Deputy late Wednesday during a drug investigation after authorities said the man failed to comply with the deputy's commands.

Kenneth Brown Walker, 39, was pronounced dead shortly before 2:30 a.m. Thursday at The Medical Center of a single gunshot wound to the head, several hours after he was stopped in a vehicle on Interstate 185. His body was sent to the state crime lab. Muscogee County Coroner James Dammann said.

During a news conference Thursday afternoon, Muscogee County Sheriff Ralph Johnson was flanked by City Manager Carmen Cavassa, City Attorney Clifton Fay and other sheriff's officials. Johnson called the incident "a tragic day for the family of the deceased and for my office and for the city of Columbus."

The deputy who shot Walker has been placed on administrative leave. Authorities say he is a veteran deputy who works with the department's Special Response Team. His name was not released.

Walker was among three other men riding inside a gray Oldsmobile allegedly seen Wednesday evening leaving an Armet Road apartment complex under surveillance for drug activity. The three



WALKER SMITH II, Leno-News

"We can't allow this to happen again," family friend Cheryl Stover said Thursday while holding a Christmas portrait of Kenneth. Cheryl said Kayla Walker. "A life is a life and an individual is gone."



THE GRAY GMC YUKON matched a description of one provided by a drug informant.

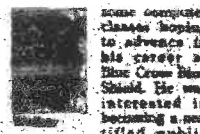
Family, friends have unanswered questions

By Kelli C. Estess
Staff Writer

Kenny Walker just had Christmas pictures taken with his wife, Cheryl, and 3-year-old daughter, Kayla, last week. They planned to mail the holiday cards this week.

Walker, 39, recently registered his daughter for preschool past fall and was talking about starting a college fund for her.

He had also completed



some computer classes, hoping to advance in his career at Blue Cross Blue Shield. He was interested in becoming a certified public

accountant.

But that all changed Wednesday night when he was shot and killed by a Muscogee County sheriff's deputy.

"They took Kenny away before he was able to fulfill his dream," his mother, Esther J. Walker, told Thursday.

The mother was told that around 9 p.m. Wednesday, Walker was out with friends when deputies pulled their vehicle over on Interstate 185 in Columbus and made all four men get out of the car.

Somewhere between Walker was getting out of the car, he was

See FAMILY, Page A1

See TRAGEDY, Page A1

Michael Wetsakopi and contributing photographer James Jachtway were traveling with a

league at The Washington Post said he picked up the grenade and tossed it out of the

A military spokesman said they were with a unit of the Army's 1st Armored Division.

him and he was eager to return home. He was to return to Washington within a few days.

TRAGEDY | No gun found in vehicle after shooting

From A1

friends were not arrested and were later released. As for Walker, Johnson said authorities later learned there was no information that he was involved in any kind of criminal activity.

Johnson said the Yukon matched the description of one provided by a confidential drug informant.

"The information was that his vehicle — and there is more than one gray vehicle in Columbus, Georgia — if this was the vehicle that the informant said it was, that these were people from Miami and they were armed," the sheriff said. Johnson said the Yukon also matched the description of one that officials believed had regularly dropped off narcotics at the apartment.

When the vehicle was stopped around 9 p.m. on Interstate 185 between Manchester Expressway and Mason Road, Johnson said all four occupants were taken out of the vehicle.

Though Walker's friends complied with the deputy's commands to get down on the ground and reveal their hands, there was "some resistance by Walker," the sheriff said.

"He was placed on the ground but his right hand couldn't be seen," Johnson said. "That hand wouldn't come out."

Johnson said the commands given consisted of: "Get on the ground, get on the ground, get on the ground," followed by a repeated refrain of "let me see your hands."

"Nine times out of 10, people will comply but occasionally they don't," he said. "This one turned out bad. I can't sugarcoat that."

When asked if he thought the shooting was justified, Johnson said he could not answer since the investigation is ongoing.

"What I can tell you is that when he shot him, he did not try to shoot him in the head," he said. "I can't tell you what was in his head other than that it's a pure judgment call if he felt like his life was in danger."

In 85 percent of cases dealt with by the Metro Narcotics Task Force, Johnson said a firearm was involved. In Wednesday night's incident, no gun was found inside the Yukon.

Before meeting with members of the media, Johnson said he had spoken with Walker's family.

"They're very upset and they should be," he said. "I'm very upset — and nothing I can say or do will change any of this."

The stop Wednesday night that ended in Walker's death was part of a lengthy narcotics investigation that began with information initially provided to Task Force agents by a confidential informant, Johnson

said.

Related arrests

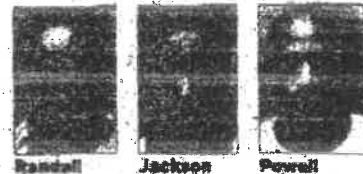
During a separate Recorder's Court hearing Thursday afternoon, Task Force agents outlined three arrests that resulted from the investigation.

Around 7 p.m. Wednesday, an informant placed a recorded call to a unit at Northwoods Apartments at 5000 Armour Road, Metro Agent J. Ellerbee said. Four ounces of crack cocaine were ordered from a man known as "Bo-Jack."

The person said they had nothing at the time and that all they had was walking out the door right now," Ellerbee testified. While those words were being recorded, agents watching the apartment observed a man leaving the unit. Agents followed as the man drove to a Popeye's restaurant on Wynton Road.

The driver was later identified as Michael Powell, 31. Inside the car, agents recovered more than \$6,000 worth of crack cocaine. Powell pleaded innocent to one count of trafficking in cocaine and remained held Thursday without bond at the Muscogee County Jail.

The informant whom agents had been dealing with also explained that the occupants inside the apartment unit were



waiting for "a supplier to resupply" them drugs and that they would arrive in a Yukon, Johnson said.

Johnson said a gray Yukon had "later showed up at the apartment." That Yukon was followed from the apartment and later stopped along the interstate, with Walker and its occupants ordered out.

Around 10:50 p.m., drug agents returned to the Armour Road apartment to execute a search warrant.

Inside apartment 3G, agents found two men, both of them convicted felons and one wanted on outstanding warrants since 1998. Arrested on drug and gun charges were Thomas Randall, 33, and Darren Jackson, 32. Randall was ordered held on more than \$15,000 bond. Jackson was held without bond.

A 9 mm gun was recovered near Jackson, who was sitting near a bed. Agent J. Memano said. Also recovered were \$2,700 worth of cocaine, a set of digital scales, plastic baggies, and an empty gallon bag with cocaine residue hidden inside a speaker system.

FAMILY | Basketball star at Kendrick

From A1

stally shot in the forehead and second shot went through his right sleeve, according to preliminary coroner reports.

The three other men did not see what happened because the officers had them face down on the ground.

An ambulance was called for Walker, and the remaining men were taken to the Sheriff's Department for questioning.

"They didn't charge them with anything, so they were able to walk," Bailey Walker said. "But Kenny couldn't walk

"He was just an all-around good guy."

Mrs. Johnson, former classmate of Kenny Walker's at Kendrick High.

"When I got the story, it was not hard to put it in order," DuBoise said.

DuBoise called the shooting a "tragedy" and said the NAACP will work with the family and their attorneys to find out the truth.

Attraction Game Station

mother dearly."

Kenny Walker was an all-star basketball player at Kendrick High School, where he graduated in 1982.

Richard Mahone was basketball coach at rival Spencer High School and a good friend of the Walker family.

"He was a fine athlete and just a fine person," Mahone said. "We were like family. This is not fair."

Walker later attended Georgia Southwestern College and received a degree in business. For more than 25 years, Walker worked at the Georgia



complied with the deputy's commands to get down on the ground and reveal their hands, there was "some resistance by Walker," the sheriff said.

"He was placed on the ground but his right hand couldn't be seen," Johnson said. "That hand wouldn't come out."

"should be," he said. "I'm very upset — and nothing I can say or do will change any of this."

The stop Wednesday night that ended in Walker's death was part of a lengthy narcotics investigation that began with information initially provided to Task Force agents by a confidential informant, Johnson

crack cocaine. Powell pleaded innocent to one count of trafficking in cocaine and remained held Thursday without bond at the Muscogee County jail.

The informant whom agents had been dealing with also explained that the occupants inside the apartment unit were

out bond.

A 9 mm near a bed near a bed skid, A150 \$2,700 worth of digital gies, and a with coeal inside a spe

FAMILY | Basketball star at Kendrick

From A1

fatally shot in the forehead and a second shot went through his right sleeve, according to preliminary coroner reports.

The three other men did not see what happened because the officers had them face down on the ground.

An ambulance was called for Walker, and the remaining men were taken to the Sheriff's Department for questioning.

"They didn't charge them with anything, so they were able to walk," Emily Walker said. "But Kenny couldn't walk away."

Kenny Walker pronounced dead shortly after 2 a.m. Thursday. His mother arrived at the hospital 10 minutes before that, but she didn't get to say goodbye.

Kenny Walker's family and friends have a lot of unanswered questions as to why he's gone.

The family announced at a press conference Thursday on the Walker front lawn that they will launch an independent investigation to answer those questions.

Daryl Stover, Kenny Walker's friend, said Sheriff Ralph Johnson came over to the family's house and admitted that a mistake had been made.

"We can't allow this to happen again," Stover said. "A life is a life and an individual is gone."

Edward DuBose, Columbus NAACP branch president, said he received a lot of calls from the community.

"He was just an all-around good guy."

Mia Johnson, former classmate of Kenny Walker's at Kendrick High

"When I got the story, it was not hard to put it in order," DuBose said.

DuBose called the shooting a "tragedy" and said the NAACP will work with the family and their attorneys to find out the truth.

Attorney Gary Parker is representing the family and said there have not been any legal moves yet.

"We are here to comfort and console the family," Parker said. "We want to make sure all of the rights of the Walker family are defended and protected to the fullest extent of the law."

After the press conference, Dunnivant came by to tell the family his preliminary findings.

"Right or wrong, I told the family they will know what happened," the coroner said.

Dunnivant said the shooting was a "bad mistake," but doesn't think it was intentional.

But it has left a mother without a son, a wife without a husband and daughter without a father.

Emily Walker, widowed several years ago, calls her only child Kenny the apple of her eye.

"He was good all his life," Walker said amid tears. "He was a typical son who loved his

mother dearly."

Kenny Walker was an all-star basketball player at Kendrick High School, where he graduated in 1982.

Richard Mahone was basketball coach at rival Spencer High School and a good friend of the Walker family.

"He was a fine athlete and just a fine person," Mahone said. "We were like family. This is not fair."

Walker later attended Georgia Southwestern College and received a degree in business. For more than 15 years, Walker worked at Blue Cross Blue Shield.

"To all of us this is a huge shock," said Mia Johnson, a former classmate of Walker's at Kendrick High. "And to hear he was killed like that."

Johnson now lives in Atlanta and said she recently saw Walker at an Albany State game.

"He was a wonderful person," Johnson said. "He was just an all-around good guy."

A member of St. Mary's Road United Methodist Church and Omega Psi Phi fraternity, Walker loved his little girl very much.

"He did everything for her but comb her hair," Emily Walker said. "They would even grocery shop together, he with his big shopping cart and she with her little shopping cart."

Kenny Walker was the party planner, and the life of the party as well, his mother said.

"He lived a life and he lived it abundantly," Emily Walker said.

Phenix City results

1. Shall the position of city manager be abolished and all of the duties and responsibilities of the city manager be transferred to a full-time mayor?

2. Do you favor changing the Phenix City Board of Education from 11 appointed to an elected board?

District 1 Ray Martin Center	Yes	No	Yes	No
	305	868	277	277

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4

DIAMOND
A. GREAT IN
B. WITH SOUP
C. WITH COUP

14K GOLD
D. GREAT IN
E. WITH SOUP
F. WITH COUP

APPENDIX G
OBSERVATION DATA

**OBSERVATION DATA
FOR PRAYER CAMPAIGN**

DATE	QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/BEHAVIOR
September 22, 2004	<p>"This is exciting." Cynthia</p> <p>"You mean we get to be researchers too."</p> <p>Catrie</p>
October 6, 2004	<p>"I am so glad we are learning about this, it's so important."</p> <p>Johnnie</p>
October 13, 2004	<p>"We're going to have to pray like our slave ancestors did if we want to see change."</p> <p>Jo Ann</p> <p>Context associates began praying specifically for economic, social, racial and political change during praise and prayer hour.</p>
October 27, 2004	<p>"This is so good. The whole church needs to be here to hear this." Johnnie</p>
November 28, 2004	<p>All the prayers during the worship service were focused on the community and community change rather than on the church and its needs.</p> <p>"I wore my prayer campaign button to work."</p> <p>Phyllis</p> <p>"My co-worker asked if we had any more, buttons so she could wear one." Cynthia</p>
December 1, 2004	<p>Context associate's supervisor inquired about the campaign button the associate was wearing and asked if the church would pray for some special requests she had.</p> <p>Phyllis</p>
GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>Context Associates demonstrated a high level of energy and enthusiasm throughout the campaign. Two associates were observed using the story of Henry "Box" Brown to illustrate the importance and power of prayer to change things. Jo Ann and Phyllis</p> <p>One member, who was not a context associate, asked to share her personal testimony during worship service concerning the prayer campaign's affect on her personal life.</p>

APPENDIX H
PERSON-TO-PERSON FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PERSON-TO-PERSON FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. As a result of the prayer campaign, what new knowledge or insight have you gained concerning the church's responsibility to pray for the community and for community change?
2. How has your commitment level to pray for your community been affected by what you have learned?
3. What would you say were the key components of the prayer campaign?
4. What are some of the community changes you believe your church, the Columbus House of Hope church should be praying for as a result of the prayer campaign?
5. When do you believe is the best time for our church to come together and pray for the community and for community change?

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